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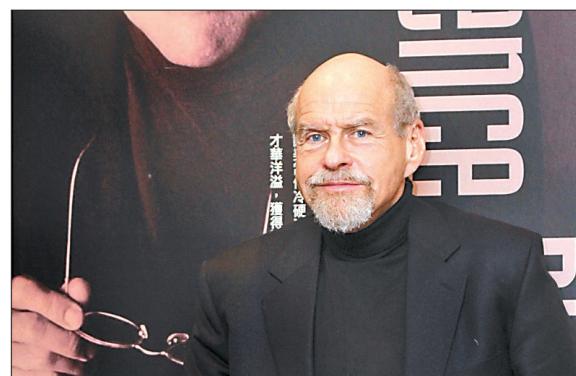
CHIEF EDITOR:
JIAN RONG
NEWS EDITOR:
YU SHANSHAN
DESIGNER: YANG GEN

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of the Rabbit

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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



Page 14 Hardboiled author speaks

American crime novelist Lawrence Block promises he might have a role for his Best Actor Award-winning fan.



Page 8 Expat life on stage

Beijing International New Short Play Festival is presenting a new collection of plays about expat life.

Online charity shop



Shopping online can help to build a free, heated bathroom for these children in Qinghai Province, saving them from having to bathe in water colder than -10 C even in mid-summer.

A new online charity store aiming to tap the popularity of business-to-consumer shopping opened last week. Based in Shanghai, Buy For Two is run by young men and women who dream of creating a social enterprise.

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meetings put
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Two Sessions put livelihood issues first



CPPCC members exchange opinions with netizens.

Gov talks tunnels

Huge underground avenues are to be planned to relieve the capital's chronic gridlock. Mayor Guo Jinlong told local lawmakers at the annual legislative session that building tunnels under the city center will be a priority for 2011.

The mayor said easing congestion remained a pressing job for the city with 20 million people and 4.8 million vehicles, but vowed to "effectively curb congestion" in five years.

In what Chinese Internet users called "the toughest congestion-tackling measures in history," city officials capped the number of new license plates to be issued in 2011 at 240,000 – a third as many as were issued in 2010.

Since January 1, car buyers in Beijing have had to apply to win a number in the license plate lottery before purchasing a vehicle.

Another promising solution may be a pilot school bus program expected to start this year, accord-

ing to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport.

The time is right to pass laws for the citywide operation of school buses, said CPPCC member Liu Yongtai, who has been pushing for bus legislation since 2004.

Bills proposing school bus regulations failed to pass the city legislature the past seven years, but in 2010 many legislators began to see school buses as a solution to the city's pressing traffic problems, Liu said.

Some 30 percent of Beijing families drive their child to school every day, so school buses could take a bite out of morning and afternoon gridlock, Liu said. Funding would not be an issue, as the government has plenty to spend, he said.

Beijing CPPCC member Ren Zhiqiang, a controversial property tycoon, criticized the quota policy, advocating instead that the city raise the cost of private car ownership.

Reducing the population

Beijing's booming overpopulation has been a big headache for the local government. Having far exceeded its expected growth, the city is now suffering from over-crowding and a shortage of medical and education resources.

During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, one of the local government's main tasks will be to "curb the overly fast and disordered increase" of the population, said Yang Zhongqi, deputy to the MPC.

"Every year, for the past three years, about 500,000 people have relocated to the capital," said Zhai Zhengwu, head of the School of Sociology and Population Studies at Renmin University of China.

"The population is already beyond the city's optimum capacity and something should be done in the future to ensure it doesn't rise further," Zhai said.

Zhai said the population issue is closely linked to other issues such as traffic, the environment and the demand for water and electricity.

Beijing CPPCC member Yu Dan, famous for her modern interpretations of Confucius, suggested that the municipal party committee, municipal government and administrative departments should be relocated to a new satellite city.

"Beijing is not only a city: it is the heart of China. With only inward movement and nothing moving out, that heart will col-

lapse one day," Yu said.

To reduce the urban population, Beijing CPPCC member An Jianjun proposed raising the cost of living to force out poor migrants who don't have legal Beijing residency.

An proposed that the government slash its support of education, health and public transportation and distribute the money to proper residents who contribute to the city's development.

His proposal would exempt non-residents who have decent jobs, pay taxes and have basic insurance.

The concept of a "greater capital area" would help Beijing with its overpopulation problems, CPPCC member Wu Yongping suggested.

He said a greater capital area should include part of Hebei Province and Tianjin, and that the city's functions could be decentralized within that area. "The population would then spread out over the whole area and not be concentrated in the urban core of Beijing," he said.

Statistics show that Beijing started 2011 with a population of 19.72 million, only 12.46 million of whom had residency in the city.

The remaining 7.26 million people were classified as a floating population that had lived in the capital for more than six months but without residency.

By Han Manman

The annual sessions of the Beijing Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and The Beijing Municipal People's Congress (MPC), commonly known as the Two Sessions, ended today.

Livelihood issues such as soaring housing costs, traffic congestion and overpopulation were the top concerns of lawmakers and advisers during the week-long sessions to address the bottlenecks in the city's social and economic development.

This year's sessions were especially important as the city discussed its 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), which sees the coming years as decisive in building a moderately prosperous society.



CFP Photos

Two Sessions' background

The Beijing Municipal People's Congress (MPC) is the legislative organ of the municipality.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Beijing committee, a political advisory body, consists of independent members and those from political parties and organizations.

Both the MPC and CPPCC Beijing committee sessions are held during every first quarter of the year before the national sessions.

CPPCC members discuss and submit suggestions for the city's development to the government, and the MPC decides on important policies. The recent Two Sessions included the 4th Session of Beijing's 11th CPPCC and the 4th Session of the 13th Beijing Municipal People's Congress.

Reining in housing costs

Beijing will strive to hold down soaring housing costs and provide more affordable housing to ensure stable growth, Mayor Guo said at the Two Sessions.

Beijing reported 10 percent GDP growth in 2010, and despite widespread complaints of price hikes, the city's consumer price index remained at 3 percent.

"We are under heavy pressure to stabilize housing and other retail prices, and optimize investment structure, now that a comparatively high proportion of investment is going into the real estate sector," Guo said in his government work report submitted to the annual session of the MPC.

This year, he said the city government would take strict measures to regulate the real estate market, ensure stable and orderly land supplies and curb speculative investment to

keep housing prices from soaring further.

He said the government also plans to build more affordable houses for low-income groups. "We will build or buy 200,000 affordable apartments this year and hopefully half of them will be ready to receive tenants at the end of the year," Guo said.

Privately owned, unoccupied residential properties could help with the capital's housing problem if the owners would rent them out, CPPCC Beijing Committee member and Chinese-American Xu Chengwu suggested Monday.

The government should encourage homeowners to let their properties instead of leaving them vacant, Xu said.

Xinhua reported that more than 40 percent of all private properties in Beijing were found to be unoccupied last year.

Other hot concerns

Changing growth pattern

Beijing will aim for an 8-percent per annum GDP growth rate in the 2011 to 2015 period: the last five years had an average annual GDP growth rate of 11 percent.

"Beijing will slow its growth rate to ... focus on quality and efficiency rather than sheer quantity of development," Mayor Guo said.

While maintaining stable GDP growth, Guo said Beijing will keep its unemployment rate below 2.5 percent and CPI at around 4 percent.

He also said he expected the city to see a 7-percent rise in incomes for urban and rural residents and a 9-percent rise in fiscal revenue.

Dongcheng homes must clean up or be demolished

Dongcheng district is preparing for sweeping redevelopment, Beijing MPC deputy Yang Liuyin, the district Party secretary, announced during group deliberations at the MPC session on Monday.

Low-rise old apartments and other buildings from the 1950s and 1970s will be either demolished or renovated, Yang said.

Adding new floors on top of old apartments is another option, according to the plan.

Yang did not reveal timetables for the plan's execution, but identified three areas that will be affected: Hepingli, Dongzhimen and Yongwai, part of the former Chongwen district.

City to start on new airport this year

Beijing is preparing to build a new airport to alleviate rising air traffic pressure on the Capital International Airport, according to MPC session records.

A draft version of Beijing's 12th Five-Year Plan explicitly proposed that in order to improve Beijing's external transportation capacity and build an international aviation hub and gateway to Asia, the first phase of the new airport must be completed in the next five years.

Additional air passenger handling capacity would total 40 million. The plan did not specify a location, investment size or expected opening date.

Driver's draconian sentence puts focus on tolls, plate swaps

By Chu Meng

Shi Jianfeng, a truck driver from Yuzhou, Henan Province, was released from what would have been life imprisonment for fraud last Sunday.

His crime: evading 3.68 million yuan in highway tolls. The time frame: nine months.

The ruling sparked an outcry across the country against the court for its excessive punishment, against the Ministry of Transportation for its excessive tolls and against the police for their poor supervision of privileged vehicles – a hole Shi took advantage of when he mounted military plates.

Weng Mengyong, the national vice minister of transportation, said at a press conference Tuesday that current road tolls are "reasonable."

"Without decades' worth of income from tolls, we wouldn't have been able to complete the extraordinary highway we have today," he said.

At the press conference, the Higher People's Court of Henan Province announced that it had ordered a retrial, citing the lower court's failure to investigate other involved parties.

Toll evasion no crime

Shi Jianfeng, a 43-year-old farmer, made 2,361 trips along the Zhengzhou-Yaoshan highway between May 2008 and January 2009.

Lugging his truckloads of sand should have cost him 2.68 million yuan in road tolls. It did not, because his cars were bearing military plates: the Ministry of Transportation exempts military vehicles from complying with national road tolls.

For his "fraud," Shi was fined 2 million yuan. His total earnings – 20,000 yuan in nine months – were garnished by the court last Friday.

But the day after sentencing, Shi Junfeng, his younger brother, appeared at the court stating that he was the truck's manager and that the licenses were purchased from a local division of the People's Armed Police and therefore not fake.

Shi Junfeng produced a one-year contract signed by Zhang Xintian and Li Jinliang, the two armed police officers carrying military identity cards who sold him the plates.

According to the contract, the division allowed four of Shi Junfeng's trucks to carry military plates, CCTV reported on Monday. Shi Junfeng, in turn, would make yearly payments of 1.2 million yuan to the division in exchange for the privilege of driving specified stretches of highway under military plates.

"The illegal use of official signs, such as armed police vehicle plates, only carries a maximum sentence of seven years in prison," said Chang Yanbo, an attorney at law from Henan Bangji Law Firm.



The Higher People's Court of Henan Province is ordering a retrial because of the lower court's failure to investigate other involved parties.

CFP Photos



Shi Junfeng (left), Shi Jianfeng's younger brother said he was the trucks' manager not his brother.

While the government does criminalize tax evasion, with a maximum prison sentence of seven years, no legislation has criminalized toll evasion, he said. Considering the extent of social harm, the former is obviously far more severe than the latter. Tax evasion is also only criminalized when someone fails to pay after being caught, he said.

"Toll evasion, no matter how big the sum, is far from meriting a life sentence," Chang said.

If the stamp on that contract proves authentic, then the case should be about how the armed police illegally provided a license swap – not toll evasion, he said.

No vehicle supervision

Ordinary trucks are required to pay tolls of 0.45 yuan per kilometer, according to the chart published on the website of the Henan Highway Department.

But a special rate exists for overweight trucks. A truck carrying a full load of sand, slag or rock may be billed 15 times as much as an empty truck, turning a 100-kilometer trip on the Henan highway into a bank-breaking 2,700-yuan excursion.

"Our rates are in line with the average rates nationwide. But many truck managers are paying off military units to borrow plates and get around this," Shi Yin-

feng, an officer from the department, said.

The toll system has created a black market for forged licenses for all manner of privileged vehicles. Military plates are preferred, as the State Council has kept them exempt from road tolls and parking fees since 1997.

Since 2000, they have also been immune to fines for traffic violations, following a joint decision by the People's Liberation Army's Headquarters of the General Staff and the General Political Department.

These privileges have created an incentive for rampant abuse: in border towns, military plates are used to provide cover for drug and human traffickers.

In June 2009, a joint campaign by law enforcement departments in Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces and Beijing broke up six groups that reportedly produced and sold more than 5,000 fake military plates to customers in more than 20 provinces.

Mo Jihong, a constitutional professor at the Law Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the problem stems from the military's secrecy and loose management of its vehicles.

"Army officers should not be using its vehicles for their per-

sonal use. Yet they are lending them to relatives and renting the plates. The army should be more open about which vehicles it controls so local supervision can spot frauds," he said.

But for many in the public, the real source of outrage is the incredible privilege the government has granted to military vehicles.

"In Hong Kong, government officials have to suffer through tolls and traffic jams just like everyone else. In Japan and Korea, even ministry-level officials take the subway or bus to work," Mo said.

"Think about this: 2,361 trips over nine months racked up 3.7 million yuan in tolls in a second-tier city in Henan Province," said Zhang Wenjie, researcher from Logistic Management School of Beijing Transportation University.

"These sky-high toll fees are obviously one of the main reasons ordinary truck drivers, who earn a living by driving these roads, are seeking military plates," he said.

"If Shi only earned his stated profit of 200,000 yuan but had to pay 3.7 million yuan in tolls, how would he be able to run a shipping business?" said Zhang.

A report published by the World Bank in 2009 said that 100,000 of the world's 140,000 kilometers of highways are located in China, and these roads require tolls far in excess of what drivers pay even in developed nations.

Zhang said the logistics industry is booming, and in the coming decade it may account for the top 10 percent of economic growth.

"But the ill management and high costs, including oil prices and tolls, have been eroding the growth of our logistics sector. Eventually it may be a barrier to the development of all business," he said.

In the meantime, drivers across the country are eagerly awaiting Shi's retrial to learn whether toll reform will ever come.

Paid video on demand to form new market

By Zhang Dongya

Video sharing websites Tudou and Youku rolled out new pricing schemes for certain videos this week. Insiders are already whispering that the blockbusters of 2011 may find as much as 20 percent of their earnings coming from online viewings.

On Tuesday, box office sensation *Let The Bullets Fly* became available for pay at the two websites, as well as at the Web portals Sina and Sohu.

Users can purchase 48-hour access to the high-definition video stream for 5 yuan. Audio is available in standard Chinese and Sichuan dialect, a popular option for people who had already seen the film in theaters.

But with so many illegal channels to obtain the film for free online, many users said the paid option was not appealing. Others said the current 5 yuan price could not compete with pirate DVDs, which do not come with a 48-hour time limit.

An employee of the website said *Let the Bullets Fly* is only being used as a trial run.

"We do not expect high income from online videos, but most movie producers are optimistic about the potential of an online box office. Its existence alone might help revitalize the domestic film market," he said.

To promote the new option, Tudou and Sohu have been entering paid viewers in a raffle for iPads and gift certificates.

Youku offers a paid monthly viewing package for 20 yuan, which gives access to two paid channels for films and educational programming. Most films are domestic and foreign classics like *The Truman Show* (3 yuan) and *Inception* (5 yuan). The educational channel offers video courses to teach professional skills and language.

A Baidu user said some videos in the educational courses are worth paying for because they were original productions not available for free elsewhere.

"I think in the future we will see movies and TV dramas released first online, and then in cinemas and on television. It is a win-win distribution pattern for all the industries, but it's unclear how it will affect box office returns," a Sohu employee surnamed Gao said.

One Hong Kong movie, *Lover's Discourse*, was screened on Letv's paid channel on January 15, two weeks after it appeared in cinemas.

According to industry statistics, China made 500 films in 2010; only 260 of these made it to the big screen. Blockbusters tend to monopolize cinemas, making film offering monotonous. The low cost of online screening may become a new channel for non-mainstream films to find viewers.

Currently, most of China's video sharing websites profit from advertisement exclusively. Paid media is expected to become a major source of their income in the future.

No country for young men

A profile of perplexed youths fighting for homes

By Huang Daohen

Every generation believes it faces greater challenges than those of its parents. In a way, they are right – the young generation confronts a relatively different environment and has to contend with problems their parents or grandparents never faced.

While predecessors may have struggled with poverty, young people nowadays face a slightly different crisis: unaffordable homes. They have to choose between financial independence, bank loans or dependence on their parents.

Beijing Today talked to three young couples who settled down in the three major cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.



A street performer carries his house on his back like a turtle.

Wenzi/IC Photo

Beijing

Borrow a home and rent it

"If you don't buy now, there will be no hope as income will never catch up with housing costs."

– Li Ling, IT engineer, Beijing

Li Lin, a 28-year-old from Chongqing, decided recently to buy an apartment in the capital: he preferred to use the word "borrow," because his parents and in-laws helped pay the down payment.

Li came to Beijing in 2002 to study

at Tsinghua University. Soon after graduation, he got married and found a job at an IT company. At the time, Li had not thought about buying a home even though the prices were much lower.

"Even then, it was a significant amount of money for newlyweds. We felt it was better to rent a house," Li said.

But surging prices and inflation made his family worried. "Prices go up every year, and if you don't buy now, there will be no hope as income will never catch up with

housing costs," Li said.

Li purchased an apartment in Chaoyang District for 24,000 yuan per square meter last month. He currently sublets the space at 3,500 yuan per month to cover his payments to the bank and rents a 50-square-meter apartment near his office for 2,000 yuan.

"Our new home is too far from the company and we are used to walking to work," he said.

Many couples in Beijing are in a simi-

lar rush to take on the expensive burden of a house payment. A recent study by the property agency Homelink shows that the capital's new home buyers are mostly from the young.

The report said the number of people under 30 applying for mortgages has risen 14.4 percent in the past three years: most first-time home buyers were 27 years old – 15 years younger than applicants in Germany and Japan, and three years younger than those in the US.

Guangzhou

Career comes first

"I won't get trapped by bank loans. I will wait to buy everything until after I have a good career."

– Simon Zhang,
Guangzhou

Others, like Simon Zhang in Guangzhou, make career a priority

Last year, Zhang, 27, married his wife Du Qing, a 25-year-old who works for a website. Both are from outside Guangzhou, and they decided to wait on buying a home.

"We are very satisfied with the home we rent. I focus on my work because I believe that if I have a good career, I will get everything – including a house in the city – sooner or later," Zhang said.

Zhang started a business with his friend after graduation. They develop online

software for some websites. Though business was dismal at first, the two began to turn a profit in 2009.

However, Zhang decided to wait on purchasing an apartment. While they could afford a modestly priced home, an ideal home in Guangzhou would still require a loan.

"We decided not to borrow a large amount of money from the bank. It doesn't make sense to take out a loan for an unaffordable house," Zhang said. "It's like we are prisoners of the bank. We won't get trapped."

The couple takes advantage of their current financial freedom by traveling abroad.

"We may not own a home, but we are comfortable and enjoying our lives," Zhang said.

Shanghai

"I will not put pressure on my parents."

– Danial Bao,
car salesman, Shanghai

Surging property prices have daily habits.

Daniel Bao, who lives in Shanghai and was born in the 1970s, says the common greeting of "Have you eaten yet?" has morphed into "Have you bought a home yet?"

Bao, a local car seller, was born in Zhengjiang Province and has been living in Shanghai for

Raising a family

the last decade. He bought his home three years ago without borrowing from his parents.

After graduating from a university in Hangzhou, Bao and his girlfriend went to Shanghai to seek their fortune. They married a year later and began renting a house.

Bao's family was poor at the time – his father was a farmer and the family relied on Bao's younger sister for financial support after she finished middle school – but they still managed to pay for his education.

"I appreciate how my father

and my family tried to support my university study. That's why I didn't ask them for help when I began to look for a home in Shanghai," he said.

"I won't put pressure on my parents," Bao said.

Things changed in 2006 when Bao's wife became pregnant, and he decided to buy a home for his expanding family.

After two months of searching, Bao was granted a loan and purchased a home for 800,000 yuan. Last year, he repaid the loan ahead of schedule.

Escaping the triad

While Lee, Bao and Xiang may feel lucky to have settled down in China's top three cities, many younger graduates are opting to return home or try their luck in second-tier cities like Taiyuan, Hefei and Wuhan.

A recent report by the Ministry of Education said that more than 60 percent of new graduates

Graduates flee the big cities

say they prefer to find work in a small- to medium-sized city.

The survey said college students are becoming more realistic, and realizing that the crippling costs of life in the big city will make it difficult for many of them to get ahead.

A similar poll by Sohu backed up the ministry's findings. In a survey

titled "Getting out of Beijing-Shanghai-Guangzhou," more than 85 percent of respondents said they would prefer to leave these big cities rather than struggle.

The inability to afford a home and being excluded from the household registration system were cited as the top concerns driving many talents back home.

Mommy wars

Is Chinese mom superior to American mom?

A week after it was published in the book review section of the *Wall Street Journal*, Yale law professor Amy Chua's essay arguing the superiority of strict Chinese parenting continues to stir debate over the merits and demerits of family education between China and the US.



Chinese moms are known to be strict and hard on their children.

The argument – whether Chua's approach to raising kids (no play dates, no sleepovers, no school plays, no TV or computer games, no grades lower than A, no class ranking less than No. 1 except for gym and drama) is a tough-minded response to a culture of chronic underachievement or some form of well-intentioned-but-misguided child abuse – has generated 5,000 comments on wsj.com, more than 100,000 comments on Facebook and dozens of response articles elsewhere on the Internet.

Chua makes the case that Western parents, with their emphasis on self-esteem, free expression and individuality, produce soft, coddled children with substandard achievements. While Chinese parents, Chua argues, understand that a strong foundation can help guarantee their children's success and therefore take on the weighty responsibility of ensuring their children's academic and extracurricular achievement – whatever it takes.

"Western parents are concerned about

their children's psyches," she writes. "Chinese parents aren't. They assume strength, not fragility, and as a result they behave very differently ... That's why the solution to substandard performance is always to excoriate, punish and shame the child," Chua writes.

All of which Chua's two daughters experienced. Chua recounts the time her then-7-year-old daughter Louisa couldn't master a piano piece and tore the score to shreds when Chua forced her back for more practice. "I taped the score back together and encased it in a plastic shield so that it could never be destroyed again. Then I hauled Lulu's dollhouse to the car and told her I'd donate it to the Salvation Army piece by piece if she didn't have 'The Little White Donkey' perfect by the next day – I threatened her with no lunch, no dinner, no Christmas or Hannukkah presents, no birthday parties for two, three, four years – I told her to stop being lazy, cowardly, self-indulgent and pathetic."

In the end, Lulu did it, snuggling with

and hugging her mother afterward, and wowing other parents at a piano recital a few weeks later.

Chua's lesson: "As a parent, one of the worst things you can do for your child's self-esteem is to let them give up. On the flip side, there's nothing better for building confidence than learning you can do something you thought you couldn't."

In a follow-up report about how Chua's essay has been received in China, the *Wall Street Journal* remarked that unlike in the US, higher education in China is considered a highly precious resource, available to a minority of people and accessed for most by means of an intensely competitive national exam. Add to that the pressures of the one-child system and you have the perfect recipe for hard-line parenting.

Yet many in China, especially in the middle class, have begun to develop an interest in the more freewheeling child-rearing practices of the West, seen as producing more creative, socially capable and happier children.

(Agencies)



The 60-second national publicity video is expected to air on CNN until February 13.

Xinhua Photo

Publicity video conveys China's overseas image

New Yorkers have been drawn closer to China this week through a video shown in Times Square.

The 60-second video, with red as its theme color, will be shown 15 times each hour until February 14 and is expected to air on CNN from January 17 to February 13. On top of the six screens in Times Square is a billboard saying "Experience China."

Dozens of Chinese people appear in the video, including celebrities like basketball star Yao Ming, astronaut Yang Liwei and producer John Woo.

The video also features ordinary people like Alipa Alimahun from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, who was shown standing in a scarf and yellow robe. Over more than half a century, the 71-year-old woman has adopted nearly 20 orphans from 10 ethnic groups.

"We hope the video can give the American people a panorama of China and let them feel the readiness of the Chinese people for making friends with them," said Jason Shen, chief executive producer of the video.

Shen said it took him and his staff nearly two months to finish the video clip. Also, several foreigners were invited to give advice.

Many countries and regions have videos to convey their images to overseas audiences, some with the purpose of promoting tourism. "Even Kosovo released a video to show how beautiful the war-plagued land really was," Shen said.

Jin Jing, a wheelchair fencer and Olympic torchbearer, took part in the filming last August. Although the video was short and her image appears for only a couple seconds, the woman was proud.

"I appear in the video as a member of the handicapped, a member of the young generation born in the 1980s," she said.

In the past, Jin said that maybe China was just a vague word easily associated with agriculture and workers.

"Through this video we want to tell the world that we have talent in all fields, like high-tech industries."

David Tool, a professor with the Beijing International Studies University, had not seen the video, but he believes in the idea of showing it in the US.

"Americans need a better understanding of the Chinese, and they (Yao Ming and Yang Liwei) are popular, great figures," he said.

The project, he noted, shows that the "Chinese government is paying attention to publicizing Chinese culture to foreigners."

He said that it was good for the video to involve ordinary people, and that Americans actually expect to see more common people, "even the poor, who are struggling for life and working hard, to show their good personality and real life."

He also said movies can be used to promote Chinese culture.

"American TV shows like *Desperate Housewives* and *Prison Break* are popular [around the world]," he said. "It is better for China to make some movie ads or TV ads for exporting."

(Agencies)

Expert's view

Either American mom or Chinese mom can be excellent

By Li Zhixin

Education is a cultural phenomenon. Different educational modes reflect different cultures. The mode that fits a Chinese family is not necessarily best for the American family, and vice versa.

Both Americans and Chinese moms can be exceptional; what's important is that they all expect their children to grow up and become productive people in society. The tactics they choose to instill these principles are associated with their respective social environments and cultural traditions.

Family education is as important as school education and social education, but even in the same country, different

families have different ways of educating their children. When we compare the American family education and Chinese one, we should take the social, historical, cultural and economical backgrounds of the countries into account.

Authority dominates family education in most Chinese families due to Confucian values. Many Chinese parents think their children are their property, while American families stress independence, competition, equality, democracy and liberty.

Chinese parents attach more importance to how to make their children better adapt to society, while American parents can adjust their educational

method in accordance with the child's personality.

Confucius said parents should teach

their children to "cultivate moral character, put family affairs in order and bring happiness to the country and peace to the world." As a result, Chinese children's accomplishments are directly connected with their parents' educational methods.

We can't easily say which method

is superior. In my opinion, whatever

methods are adopted, parents need to

teach children how to be responsible

human beings.

– Huang Heqing, senior editor of

Family Education magazine in China

The road to Nasdaq

Bona turns to Hollywood for Paramount dream

Nasdaq IPO

"The overseas IPO won't be easy for Bona, but we already became the first domestic film company listed in the US," Yu Dong said.

Yu, a graduate of the Beijing Film Academy, had his first job at the country's largest film complex, Beijing Film Studio. "I love movies, and the film industry is an industry full of dreams," Yu said.

Later, Yu was assigned to head up domestic distribution at China Film Group Corporation for several years before branching off to start Beijing Bona Culture Communication in 1999. The company was backed by Poly Group in its early days.

Bona became the first private company allowed to distribute films. It was also granted the right to distribute films from Europe and throughout Asia.

Yu's policy has changed little since those first days: he emphasizes building goodwill with cinema managers and using screenings to show that Bona films are capable of getting people into the cinemas. Under his leadership, Bona has become one of the country's most successful distribution firms.

But comparisons to Miramax alone are not enough to attract American investors. Before Bona's Nasdaq debut, Yu and his team spent more than a week briefing US institute investors and fund managers about the country's promising movie market.

However, investors were still hesitant to buy in.

Yu said Nasdaq was one of the hardest ways to go about being listed abroad. Before Bona's IPO, many industrial experts told Yu to list on the domestic A-share market or the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

"It should have been relatively easy, as two film companies have already set precedents," Yu said.

Indeed, Bona has a good reputation in Hong Kong having arranged the distribution of many Hong Kong films.

But Yu said Bona's goals are more than financial: he dreams of becoming the Chinese counterpart to Paramount Pictures.

The US has mature capital and film production markets. Seeking a US IPO provided Bona with an international platform that could see cooperation with big-name US studios like Warner Brothers and Paramount, Yu said.

"It's a chance to push our company to international standards and raise brand awareness among an international audience," he said.

Yu said venture capital groups like Shen Nanpeng's Sequoia Capital China said Bona should list overseas. Under current law, Chinese firms cannot directly receive foreign investment: getting listed abroad is one of the best ways to pull venture capital into China.

Before its debut, Bona raised \$11.5 million (75.7 million yuan) from Sequoia Capital and SIG Asia and 100 million yuan from Matrix Partner China.

Future investments

Now listed in the US, Bona said it would keep investing, filming and releasing films.

Last year, the world produced about 5,000 films: one in 10 of these were produced in China. "We are confident that the Chinese film industry is in a period of

By Huang Daohen

When Yu Dong first landed at New York in 2007, he was stunned as he gazed up at the Wall Street sign.

"It is a kingdom of capital," he said.

Three years later, with actress Gong Li at his side, Yu, founder of Bona Film Industry, rang the bell in New York to open the first day's trade.

But Yu's Hollywood journey has yet to begin: Yu hopes that his Bona, known as the Chinese Miramax, can grow to become the next Paramount.



Xiong Tao/CFP Photo

About Yu Dong

Yu Dong, 40, is a Chinese film producer and presenter. He is also the founder and CEO of Bona Film Industry, a newly Nasdaq-listed film company that has distributed and co-produced 139 films, including 29 international releases such as *Confession of Pain*, *Dragon Tiger Gate* and *Flash Point*.

rapid development," Yu said.

If every Chinese person goes to the cinema at least one time per year, China would be the second largest movie market in the world with annual box-office returns of 30 billion yuan, Yu said.

At the end of last year, Bona had contracts with 25 actresses and actors and operated six cinemas in Beijing. The company plans to invest 500 million yuan to build 20 more cinemas with 200 screens across the country in the coming five years.

When complete, Bona would be among Asia's largest movie studios, Yu said.

Dialogue

Q: What do you think of the quality of Chinese movies today?

A: They are generally unsatisfying. Nowadays, the domestic film industry is trying hard to develop marketable films that will generate cash. But the problem is that these Chinese movies lack international influence. During the week-long briefing in the US, we can see that even if American (investors) were optimistic about China's film market, they doubted its quality.

In the past, some Chinese films, such as *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* and *Hero*, have attracted global audiences, but few movies have won international awards or become globally successful in recent years.

Q: What can the Chinese film industry do to compete abroad?

A: The country's film industry is still in the early stages of development and has a long way to go. Currently, domestic film companies like Bona need to learn from and cooperate with Hollywood. That's the reason we chose to get listed on the Nasdaq.

One tendency we need to pay attention to is this obsession with commercialization. Many directors believe big name stars are the best way to attract viewers. But big stars drive up production costs. Movies are supposed to be a cultural entertainment product based on artistry. Whether they have an artistic quality or not is an important way to measure the maturity of the movie industry.

Q: Did you expect that Bona's price would flop to \$6.59 per share on its debut day, down \$1.92 from when it was issued?

A: It was unexpected, but we are not disappointed. There are several reasons for the slump. First of all, it was the Christmas holiday in the US, a bad time for investments. Secondly, as I mentioned, the investors are still cautious about the quality of the Chinese film. We also had some problems with technical misconduct as the first domestic film company to get listed overseas. It turned out that overseas investors didn't understand our shareholder structure and profit model, and that our focus is long-term returns.

Q: What's your plan in the future?

A: Now that we're listed on Nasdaq, I will be working hard for my unknown American bosses. We'll invest more in domestic cinema expansion and film production. I hope we can make another 100 quality movies. Then I can retire and become a teacher at my alma mater, the Beijing Film Academy.

2010 sets record for foreign investment

Foreign direct investment in China hit a record \$105.7 billion (696 million yuan) last year, the government said Tuesday, highlighting growing confidence in the economy even as the central government seeks to rein in growth.

Investment by overseas companies rose 17.4 percent year-on-year, with more than a fifth of the money flowing into the red-hot property sector, Ministry of Commerce spokesman Yao Jian said at a press conference.

China attracted \$14 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in December alone, up 15.6 percent from a year earlier, Yao said.

"The improvement in the investment environment has become a new driving force of China's FDI," Yao said.

Blistering growth in the world's second-largest economy and expectations for a stronger currency have attracted a growing number of foreign investors to China, hoping to get a better return on their money, analysts said.

"The strong full-year FDI figures show that the world is still largely sold on the China growth story, viewing China as a high-growth, high-returns location," said Alistair Thornton, an analyst at IHS Global Insight.

"Tepid growth prospects in the euro-zone and United States have only served to heighten this," he said.

The data were released ahead of key figures due later this week that are expected to show the economy expanded by a rapid 10 percent in 2010.

Beijing, alarmed by soaring food and property prices, has been trying to reduce the volume of money flowing into the economy – in November, inflation rose at its fastest pace in two years.

The large amount of foreign funds into the real estate market – 22.7 percent of the total FDI – will likely be a "concern" for Beijing, Thornton said.

FDI slowed sharply in August, rising 1.4 percent year-on-year compared with 29.2 percent in July and 39.6 percent in June.

But in September it picked up again, increasing 6.1 percent year-on-year, while in October it rose 7.9 percent and then leapt 38.2 percent in November.

The data include investment by overseas companies in industries such as manufacturing, real estate, services and agriculture but exclude money put into banks and other financial institutions.

China's investment abroad in non-financial sectors also set a record in 2010, rising 36.3 percent on year to \$59 billion as the country pumped more money into overseas energy, mining and agricultural projects.

Despite the sharp increase, Yao said China wanted even greater access to foreign markets and highlighted the recent obstacles encountered by Chinese firms when trying to invest in the US steel, manufacturing and telecom sectors.

"China is improving its investment environment and legal system. We hope relevant countries will further open their markets and areas available for foreign investment," he said.

Overseas investment through mergers and acquisitions totaled \$23.8 billion, accounting for 40.3 percent of the total.

At the end of 2010, the country's accumulated overseas investment in non-financial sectors stood at \$258.8 billion, Yao said.

(Agencies)

Property tax – should we levy or not?



Potential home buyers line up to look at apartments.

By Zhao Hongyi

Over the past two months, as a result of rocketing real estate prices, fierce debates have risen over the possibility of levying property taxes to discourage speculators from buying multiple properties.

Municipalities like Chongqing and Shanghai say they believe taxes will counteract the effect of speculators who drive up housing prices by purchasing multiple properties. Chongqing targets high-end property owners with a tax estimated at 0.5 to 1.5 percent.

Shanghai focuses on houses bigger than 70 square meters with a rate of 0.5 to 0.6 percent.

Beijing, meanwhile, has been reluctant to enact similar measures. On Monday, Vice Mayor Ji Lin

told the municipal congress in its annual meeting that the government has no plans to implement a tax in the foreseeable future.

In the 30 years after the People's Republic was established, China distributed housing to its urban dwellers, a practice in line with most Communist countries.

But the practice stopped in the mid-'90s due to population pressure. The country opened up its real property market to investors, developers and individual purchasers.

But due to a huge shortage of supply, housing prices have been soaring. Wealthy people have taken advantage of easy loans from commercial banks to speculate on the market.

In first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, prices of sophisticated units have risen as high as 40,000 to 100,000 yuan per square meter. Prices in second-tier cities like Hangzhou, Chongqing and Nanjing are catching up.

An apartment in the center of these cities might even cost more than some apartments in New York, Moscow and London.

Accelerating urbanization and industrialization is driving the fever as well. Every year, 10 to 15 million rural residents migrate to cities, and this trend may continue into the next decade, experts forecast. China's State Council anticipates as many as 400 million people will move into cities over the next two decades.

China's central government, in an attempt to appease the public, has ordered local governments to build a certain amount of "economic houses" – cheap but high-quality apartments – to fulfill housing demands.

Still, prices are going up.

Another idea that has been bandied around is levying an inheritance tax to prevent irrational purchasers from buying more than one apartment for their children.

"I don't think the tax will be effective in curbing speculative house purchases unless supply and demand are in balance," said Ren Zhiqiang, chairman of the Beijing-based Huayuan Property Company.

Comment

Common practice abroad

The levying of real property tax and inheritance tax is a common practice in the US and Europe. The Chinese government has long been protecting its people from it, but a small portion of the populace is taking advantage of the system, speculating on the market for its own benefit. I fully support plans to punish these speculators. The punishment should even be heavier.

– Wang Jun, professor, Peking University

Unreasonable

We are not wealthy as Americans and Europeans. It is not easy for most people to purchase and maintain homes. A real estate tax is unreasonable.

– Yang Jinwen, engineer, EDF

Protect the working class

The Communist Party traditionally protects the fundamental benefits of its people, but it has also never shied away from punishing speculators. I believe it must levy high taxes on those who own too many houses and have too many transactions. But it's not right to impose taxes on middle- and working-class families who only own one flat.

– Lao Song, supervisor, Qingdao Harbor Authority

Curb speculations

Speculating on the market is a common phenomenon. I think it is better to use the market to punish these speculators by increasing the supply of land and housing under careful planning.

– Roderio Garay, Chilean student studying in Beijing

Chongqing initiates 'civilized tables' to combat extravagance

By Zhang Dongya

It is common for Chinese revellers at banquets to over-order, as it's considered a sign of courtesy. Leftovers are then discarded.

Last week, some restaurants in Chongqing launched a campaign called "civilized tables" to combat this extravagance and waste.

Twenty-five restaurants are participating in the movement. As part of the commitment, they are not allowed to mislead customers about dish servings; all servers are required to remind diners to order an appropriate amount of food.

To encourage more people to finish their food, restaurants will return 5 or 10 yuan to tables that have empty plates. If food is left, servers will ask diners to take it home in doggy bags, provided for free. Those who pack their leftovers will be given a gift: the campaign's mascot, called Rice Doll.

According to a survey, Chinese



Restaurants in Chongqing will begin encouraging people to finish their food.

Zhang Zhi/IC Photo

diners leave as much as 10 percent of their orders uneaten. In 2010, Chongqing had a turnover of 44 billion yuan in the catering industry. Accordingly, the waste is 4.4 billion yuan.

The country as a whole wasted about 200 billion yuan's worth of food last year.

Chongqing governors will promote the campaign in 1,400 restaurants. They plan to promote it citywide in March.

Chongqing became China's fourth municipality in 1997 and has taken many effective measures in the city's construction and security.

Comment

A good start

In the last two years, taking leftovers home has become popular. For one, price hikes have forced people to be more economical; second, more people realize the consequences of wastefulness. The new campaign requires restaurants to take the initiative, which will encourage people to order what they can eat.

– Lolo Guo, 29, native in Chongqing

Habit and custom are tough to break

Most people will refuse to pack leftovers when they eat out with colleagues. Others who are wealthy seldom consider boxing up food. Though things have changed a little bit in recent years, I feel those old habits still persist.

The proposal is necessary, but it is hard to say whether the measures will work because these eating habits were formed during childhood.

– Holy Feng, 28, teacher at Southwest University

Probably just a show

There is always a tremendous amount of waste at tables, especially from big meals billed by companies and units. When a company feasts in China, it is always for lavishness and extravagance. I'm guessing companies won't choose restaurants that promote saving and thrift because they will cause embarrassment when the waiter reminds the boss that he ordered too much.

– Woai, netizen on cq.people.com.cn

A fish out of water still has to survive

American theater producer presents expat stories in Beijing and New York

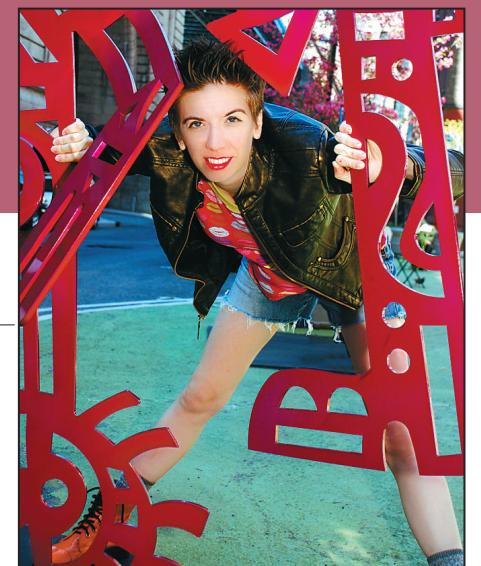
By Liang Meilan

Foreigners in China are here for many different reasons. Some are here to make a fortune, some want to help the disadvantaged, while others want to experience an exotic culture.

Though their intentions vary, they all contribute to the ongoing mosaic of Chinese-foreign interaction. Interesting cross-cultural stories emerge every day.

The 2011 Beijing International New Short Play (BINSP) Festival, which lowered its curtain on Sunday, provided two weeks of thought-provoking plays that dealt with many of these cross-cultural issues.

The festival's producer and chief director, 31-year-old Anna Grace from the US, defines herself as an honest recorder of expat lives. She says China has provided her the right track to accomplishing her theater goals.



Anna Grace

Photos provided by Anna Grace

A well-received festival

The festival has been conducted for three years. This year's theme was "Fish Out of Water."

"Here, 'fish' in some sense refers to expats living in China who encounter numerous cross-cultural problems," Grace said.

The festival teamed up 16 classic plays like *Adam and Eve* and original plays reflecting expats' lives in China. Yet the latter caused much more sensation in the audience.

The audience's favorite play was a musical called *Rent a White Guy*, based on an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Beijing-based journalist Mitch Moxley. Grace, the playwright, said she added some additional plot twists to make the play funnier.

The musical is about an English major, Charlie, who cannot find a decent job in the US, so he goes to Beijing. He ends up being employed by a businessman named Mr. Li just because he has a white face. His responsibilities are to go around shaking hands and giving speeches.

One thing leads to another. He is hired by a Chinese girl looking to rent a white boyfriend for her birthday party. This part caused a stir in the audience.

Grace said this was based on a true story as well. "I just made it shorter and exaggerated some parts. All the plots in the musical are based on true stories," she said.

Grace said the things that happen to Charlie are "ridiculous" – a nod to the idea that real life is stranger than fiction sometimes – and she wanted to accentuate the ridiculous parts by making it into a musical.

In another scene, foreign partygoers flirt with Chinese girls in a nightclub but stay away from the white girls.

"I thought some would find it offensive and hate it, but others may love it and go, 'Oh, I know someone like that,'" Grace said.

"I accept their comments. I want just to write a play that is honest but exaggerated to reflect foreigners' lives in China and the ridiculous things that happen to them."

Grace said the play will be rewritten and moved to the stages of New York, where it will appear as a full-length play.

Other plays that were well received included one about how a foreigner and Chinese kid in a combined family get



The audience's favorite play was Rent a White Guy.

along with one another and their stepparents.

A fish dreams a theater dream

When Grace arrived in China in 2006, she also considered herself a fish out of water.

"A real fish out of water will die, but fish like us expats have to survive," she said, adding that she was lucky to find ways to not only survive but thrive – by living her theater dream.

Grace's life is somewhat linked to the stage and theater.

She was born and grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where she got her associate degree in vocal performance and bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy.

She fell in love with theater early in high school and performed in many school plays. A significant portion of her life has since been related to the stage.

She started as a music major in college and had lots of opportunities to perform on stage. She was also an active member of a traveling debate team in college.

Over the past 20 years, she has worked on more than 60 theatrical productions, including the professional Broadway tours of *Hairspray* and *Cinderella*.

Now, the focus of her career is running a community theater workshop (Beijing Actors Workshop) and a theater company called Brooklyn/Beijing International Theater Experience (BITE) with branches in New York and Beijing.

The BINSP Festival produced by BITE Beijing enjoys a favorable reputation within China's expat community. Peking Roulette, a cross-cultural play pro-

duced by Grace, was presented in the Midtown International Theater Festival (MITF) at the Dorothy Strelsin Theatre in New York last July. It won an MITF award for Best Sound Design.

In recollecting her theatrical experiences, Grace attributes a large part of her success to her adventurous personality.

"I always think of going outside," she said. After college, Grace took a year to hike the Appalachians, going 2,000 miles from Georgia to Maine.

After that, she steered her career toward music and philosophy, then to theater by becoming a drama teacher at a small school. She directed for local community theaters around this time.

In 2006, Grace made a crazy decision and went to Zunyi, Guizhou Province in southwest China and taught English in a high school for a year and a half.

"I knew nothing about China. I didn't even know that Beijing was the capital of China. I saw no difference between Beijing and Zunyi, honestly. I just came for its seemingly good weather," she said.

By that time, she was married and focused on making money and being a good wife. She sort of gave up on her theater dream.

But in Guizhou, she went through a bitter divorce, and around this time, in 2007, she decided to move to Beijing to reconnect with theater as a way of integrating herself with like-minded people.

She opened a workshop introducing American-style theater and training actors, writers and directors.

This was the start of the part of her life she calls "amazing."

"Sometimes you don't always get the chance to do the things that you love to do full-time," she said. "I feel really blessed that I could do theater without starving to death."

A boss but not a businesswoman

Near the Beijing Olympics in 2008, there were still very few American-style community theaters in Beijing. Grace's Beijing Actors Workshop was among the first community theaters in town, all established by expats. Well-known ones include Playhouse and Beijing Improv.

"With more and more foreigners coming to China, Beijing doesn't lack talented theater actors, playwrights and directors, both professional and amateur," Grace said. "Community theater provides a platform for them to show their talent."

Beijing Actors Workshop features new plays concerning expats' lives. "The content is unique, but the method is common," Grace said. "The festival is meant to show Chinese people what American theater is like."

Grace said the difference between community theaters and commercial ones is the latter choose plays they think can earn them a profit. "But I do plays that the writers and actors and directors are passionate about, like real-life stories about expats," she said.

"Then we have to find people to come and see them."

That is the challenge. The BINSP Festival barely breaks even on good years.

"In the first year of the festival, we had a small budget and were very careful about the money," she said. But at last year's festival, they were able to find advertisers for the play *Wit*, and robust ticket sales boosted revenue.

"We keep it simple because the focus is not on the big fancy set, it's about the writing and acting," Grace said. She adheres to the principle "art for art's sake."

"I don't make any money from the performances, but I don't lose money," she said.

Liu Tao, the Chinese co-producer of the festival, holds a different opinion. "To make the festival sustainable, thus expanding the impact of community theater in China, we should adopt some commercial tricks while at the same time ensuring the quality of the theater," he said.

"As a boss of two theater companies in Beijing and New York, Grace should have a business mindset," he said, pointing out that an attempt to localize American theater in China might be a breakthrough for promoting cultural exchange as well as getting more funds for further development.

Currently, Grace is trying to create a theater workshop in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. As the one in Beijing, she plans on keeping the themes related to expat life.

"I think I have no business trying to tell Chinese people how to do Chinese theater. But I do welcome Chinese people, as well as people from other countries who are interested in American theater, to join and learn from us," she said.

US embassy to open first consumer safety office in Beijing

By Han Manman

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is setting up its first overseas office in China in an effort to improve its coordination with the Chinese government and manufacturers to help reduce the recall of sub-standard products.

The move is to "make sure manufacturers and importers know about our standards so that we don't have to constantly rely on recalls" that cost money, said Inez Tenenbaum, chairman of the CPSC.

As an independent agency of the US government, the CPSC is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks from consumer products, such as toys, cribs, power tools and

household chemicals.

"Rather than rely on recalls to help us enforce our standards in the US, we will move toward being more proactive and prevent problems from occurring in the first place," Tenenbaum said. "By taking a proactive preventative posture, we can reduce the number of recalls and keep our consumers safe and also prevent the loss of revenue and damage to a manufacturer's brand."

She said choosing China for the organization's first overseas office does not mean that the US is showing more concern about the safety of Chinese products: it was a logical first step "because 45 percent of the consumer products sold in the



The recall of Chinese toys drop this year thanks to China's efforts.

CFP Photo

US and 90 percent of all toys come from mainland China."

The new office, located within the US embassy in Beijing, will have just two employees to start, an attache and a safety specialist. The Beijing office won't be testing or certifying Chinese products – these procedures will be done by a third-party laboratory, but will work closely with China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) and Chinese counterparts to help educate Chinese manufacturers about American product standards, Tenenbaum said.

Talking about his new job, Jeff Hilsken, the first US attache in charge of consumer product safety, said the biggest chal-

lenge he is likely to meet in the coming months is getting a more complete picture about how the AQSIQ handles product safety in China.

China has been working to improve foreign consumer confidence in its exports after a series of food and product safety problems, such as tainted fish and the use of lead-based paints in toys and other goods, Hilsken said.

The number of CPSC recalls of products from China dropped to 220 last year, from 346 in 2008, and recalls of toys from China dropped to 44 last year from 172 in 2008, Tenenbaum said.

"We're seeing an improvement in terms of the quality of products coming out of China," she said.

Finnish academy launches Millennium Technology Prize

By Chu Meng

Technology Academy Finland is now requesting nominees from around the world for the 2012 Millennium Technology Prize, the Finnish embassy in Beijing announced Monday.

Kimmo Lahdevirta, the embassy's minister, said the prize is awarded every other year to individuals or groups who improve the quality of human life and support eco-friendly sustainable development through technological innovation.

The first prize was awarded in 2004 to the UK's Tim Berners-Lee, director of the World Wide Web Consortium.

Eligible nominations will be examined by the prize's Interna-

tional Selection Committee, comprising a distinguished network of leading Finnish and international scientists and technologists. The selected nominees for the final round will be announced next spring.

Nominations in China will be accepted until July 31. They can be made by scientific societies, universities, research institutions, companies, associations as well as individuals. Potential candidates cannot nominate themselves.

"Ensuring adequate supplies of clean water, using energy efficiently and dealing with threats to human health are all challenges whose solutions require new technological innovations," said Jarl-Thure Eriksson, chair-

man of the International Selection Committee.

"The invention of the incandescent lamp, radio and penicillin are well-known milestones on the path of technological development," Eriksson said.

The second prize in 2006 was awarded to revolutionary new LED light sources. The third prize in 2008 was for innovative controlled drug release. The fourth was awarded for developments in dye-sensitized solar cells.

The Millennium Technology Prize awards more than 1 million Euros for the final winner. "The president of the Republic of Finland is a patron of the prize," Lahdevirta said.

He also said that in order



Minister of the Finnish embassy, Kimmo Lahdevirta, and his wife, Pia Kaikonen

Photo provided by Finnish Embassy

to help Chinese nominees get more familiar with the prize and every step of the election procedure, a series of introduc-

tory workshops and lectures will be held at the embassy by officials from the committee in the coming months.

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Who are the heroes of modern China?

By Liang Meilan

Recently, *The World of Chinese*, a bimonthly English magazine dedicated to Chinese language and culture, began conducting a survey on "heroes in modern China." The magazine invited Raymond Zhou, a reputable social critic and executive editor-in-chief at *China Daily*, to talk on the topic at the Bookworm Wednesday night.

Zhou said Chinese and Western understandings of hero sometimes overlap, but they are not the same. "The sentence we hear in Hollywood movies most frequently is, 'You are my hero.' It cannot be translated into Chinese," he said.

Zhou classified Chinese heroes into three categories: heroes of war, heroes who demonstrate courage, and heroes who make sacrifices. "In the Chinese mainland, when people talk about heroes, they are usually referring to revolutionary or nationalistic heroes," he said.

The topic then shifted to a question about whether an icon like Yao Ming or a pop singer can be considered a hero of modern China.

"Some icons can be heroes," Zhou said, but he added that "icon" and "hero" are different things. For instance, Zhang Ziyi, the famous female lead in several movies, can never be called a hero because she isn't a role model.

Charlie Custer, web editor of



Raymond Zhou, a social critic, discussing what it means to be a hero in modern China

Photo by Liang Meilan

The World of Chinese, said in China, the concept of hero or ouxiang (idol) is closely tied to being a role model that people can look up to.

"In Western countries, hero implies superiority," he said. "Heroes can also be fictional characters. Some Western kids take the Monkey King from Chinese

literature to be their hero."

He said that he was surprised to find many Chinese people call themselves their hero.

Zhou considered the reaction natural. "It is typical of the 'me generation' born in the 1980s. There are two ways to look at the phenomenon. One is to see the kids as selfish and

self-centered. Another is that we can see they have confidence," he said.

Someone from the audience, a Japanese and English teacher at Harrow International School, offered a thought-provoking idea that in the 1990s, as young Chinese people began to learn how to make money, their idea of role models and heroes changed. But these heroes are not moral heroes. All the good attributes we see in people from old-fashioned movies no longer exist.

"I think there is a vacuum," she said.

She also gave an example of a *China Daily* article that reported two students helping an old woman go to the hospital. "Sending an old woman to the hospital is an ordinary thing. But when it comes to young people, it's considered special, which means this kind of caring is lacking in the younger generation," she said.

Zhou nodded in agreement. "Chinese youth are looking to be rebels. The more rebellious you are, the easier it is for you to become a person that lots of people look up to. One example is Han Han. But actually, he can be a model because of his great skills in communication and writing," he said.

The survey results will be published in *The World of Chinese* on Monday. The magazine can be purchased from the Bookworm.

Open source, Beijing GNU/Linux User Group's constant pursuit

By Li Zhixin

To Linux enthusiasts, Beijing GNU/Linux User Group (BLUG) is a paradise for those who want to brainstorm and share technical advice. The group has been ramping up efforts and activities to raise public awareness of open source and attract more members.

BLUG was launched in November 2002 as a non-profit organization that promotes and supports the GNU/Linux community in China. The original founders were largely entrepreneurs who had one common element in their business: open source software.

The group now has more than 1,600 registered members, both locals and expats using English as a common language. Over the years, it has invited major players of the open source scene, such as Red Hat and the domestic Red Flag, and open source celebrities to give lectures on the second Tuesday of every month.

"Our members also give short presentations or demos of their current work to get some feedback and suggestions," said Peter Junge, the current president of the group.

"BLUG is a meeting place for people who create or use open

source software, especially Linux, to make friends, share ideas and learn about new developments in the open source movement," said Derrick Sobodash, who joined the group in 2009 (Sobodash is also an editor at this paper).

He said the core idea behind Linux is sharing. "When code is open, more people can help fix bugs. You don't have to wait for Microsoft to fix it, because any talented person can fix a program on his own and share that fix. It also gives you more to learn from so that when you create a program, you don't have to start inventing from scratch."

Junge said BLUG looks to provide a forum for professionals, entrepreneurs, college students and amateurs to invigorate their passion for the system. It also helps show Linux as more than just a tool: it's a community.

"If you would like to learn about free software development, this is the right place. Here you can find out how you can contribute to the free software community not only as a programmer, but also in many other ways," Junge said.

Michael Iannini, a member,



Beijing GNU/Linux User Group members getting together
Photo provided by Peter Junge

of business than passion. "Many Chinese professionals don't see open source as a movement, but as a job opportunity. This mentality hinders sharing and, in essence, counters any productive gains in the evolution of free software," he said.

However, Julien Forgeat, an Ericsson employee and group member, doesn't quite agree. "There are some very passionate open source superstars in China, like Alibaba, Baidu, Taobao, Kaixin01, Renren and Youku," he said. "China is making some really big contributions in open sources and is becoming one of Linux's

most powerful supporters."

Besides actively bringing open source software to public attention, BLUG also engages in charity work. The group collects computers from embassies and companies and donates them to migrant schools.

The group recently donated more than 100 computers to Chaoyang Hongqi School and Changping Xinxing School after equipping them with Linux, and open source educational software, Forgeat said.

For more information about Linux and meet-ups in Beijing, visit Beijinglug.org.

Event

Hutong School Sanlitun opening party

Hutong School is opening its second branch in Sanlitun. To celebrate its opening, the school will hold a party for students as well as people who are interested in the school. Foods provided include canapés, Belgian beer, and wine.

Where: Beijing Hutong School, 8 Shuangsi Hutong, Jiugulou Dajie, Xicheng District

When: January 21, 7:30 -10 pm
Tel: 6403 8670
Cost: 100 yuan

UCCA media salon: Titanic, German satirical magazine

Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is presenting the year's first media salon centering on German satirical magazine *Titanic*. In Germany, sarcasm not only appears in literature, but is also commonly used in mass media. Former senior editor of *Titanic*, Christian Schmidt, will talk about the history of the magazine and different formats of satire.

Where: UCCA, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 22, 4-6 pm
Tel: 8459 9269
Registration email: qian.xu@peking.goethe.org
Cost: Free

Basic first aid training

SOS International Hospital is holding a one-day basic first-aid course that will teach people the essential skills needed in case of an emergency.

Where: The Early Years Childhood Centre, Dulwich College Beijing, River Garden Villas, Houhaiyu, Baixin Zhuang, Shunyi District
When: January 22, 9:30 am - C 4:30 pm
Tel: 8046 5132
Cost: 580 yuan

Exploring Songzhuang

Songzhuang is an important art zone in town. It is home to many artists from different parts of China who come to Beijing to pursue their dreams. 90 percent travel agency is organizing a trip to Songzhuang. A look at artists' studios may provide people a unique glimpse into the lives of Chinese artists and the living conditions of these migrant artists. An English-speaking guide will accompany the group.

Where: Meet in front of the McDonald's Ginza Mall, 48 Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: January, 9 am - 6 pm
Tel: 15117916648
Cost: 390 yuan, 350 yuan for children under 16

(By Liang Meilan)

Calling climbing enthusiasts to the ice climbing festival



By Wang Yu

Usually the Spring Festival holiday is a boring week for outdoor lovers. But this year, a two-day national ice climbing festival in Miyun County may be the answer for those who need to get outside and away from the fireworks.

Organized by the Chinese Mountaineering Association (CMA), the event will take place at Taoyuan Xiangu Nature Park on February 7 and 8. Two artificial ice cliffs will be available for climbers of different skill levels. The venue last hosted a national ice climbing event in 2007.

Local and overseas professional climbers will provide four training sessions on the first day. Two preliminary matches will be held in the afternoon, followed by a barbecue later that night at Yunmengxia.

The final match will start the next morning. After lunch, professional climbers will perform in the event's finale.

Ice climbing first became popular in Western countries in the 1980s. The scene has developed slowly in China, though the sport has attracted more participants in recent years.

CMA is organizing this year's event to promote the sport to climbers and non-climbers alike. Participants should bring their



Miyun country hosts national ice climbing competitions.

Zhang Wei/CFP Photos

own equipment, though organizers will provide essential gear for beginners.

All participants should register on-site on February 6. Organizers will provide a bus that leaves Dongzhimen at 3 pm (50 yuan round-trip).

The average price of hotel

rooms in Miyun, should participants decide to stay overnight, is 220 yuan per person.

For more information, visit summitxp.net or call 8563 0169. Registration needs to be completed by January 31.

All participants will receive a North Face winter cap.

National ice climbing festival

Where: Taoyuan Xiangu

Nature Park, Miyun County

When: February 7-8

Cost: 100 yuan per person for enrollment

Website: summitxp.net

Tel: 85630169

Haidian opens sports facilities of 100 schools for neighborhood use

By Annie Wei

Gym memberships tend to be too expensive for many urbanites, but there may be an alternative: more and more schools are opening their facilities for public use.

Chaoyang District set an example in 2009 when it encouraged schools to open their sports facilities to the public, and Haidian District has recently followed suit. One hundred schools have recently opened their pools and gyms to public.

Haidian is plush with schools and universities with excellent facilities. No. 19 Middle School, for example, has a 200-meter-long track, a standard 50-by-25-meter swimming pool, soccer field and volleyball, basketball and badminton courts. These facilities are open to the public on weekends.

According to Haidian Sports Bureau, the school facilities are closed during school hours. But the public can use the facilities from 6 to 10 pm. However, to guarantee the safety issues in the schools, some high schools require visitors

to apply for a walk-in permit first.

Below are some select schools with swimming pools and indoor playgrounds at reasonable prices.

Qinghua University

Where: 1 Qinghua Dong Lu, Haidian District

Open: 4:30-9 pm
Tel: 6279 2477

Cost: 300 yuan per game on basketball court, 32 yuan per hour for badminton, 10 yuan per hour for swimming pool

Beijing Sports University

Where: 48 Xinxi Lu, Haidian District

Open: 4:30-9 pm
Tel: 6298 9225

Cost: 30 yuan for 90 minutes in the swimming pool, 800 yuan per hour for basketball, 60 yuan per hour for badminton, 40 yuan per hour for tennis

Beihang University

Where: 37 Xueyuan Lu, Haidian District

Open: 4:10 pm
Tel: 8233 9116

Cost: 25 yuan per hour for the swimming pool, 80 yuan per hour

for basketball

Renmin University

Where: 59 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm
Tel: 6251 4344

Cost: 30 yuan for the swimming pool, 20 yuan for badminton, 15 yuan for table tennis, 80 yuan for tennis and 350 yuan for the basketball game

Beijing Fuchenglu Middle School

Where: 313 Fuchengmen Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 6:9:30 pm
Tel: 8853 0023

Cost: 30 yuan for shuffleball and 400 yuan for basketball

Haidian Experimental Primary School

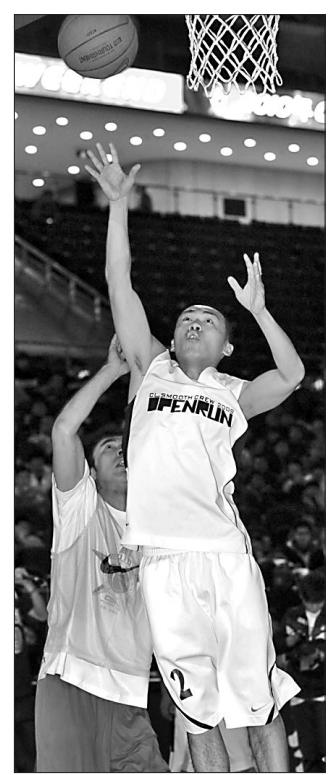
Where: 107 Xisanhuan Bei Lu, Haidian District

Open: 7:10:30 pm
Tel: 6842 5079

Cost: 25 yuan for swimming pool, badminton and table tennis

Visit hdtj.bjhd.gov.cn/scgl/gzdt1 for more details.

CFP Photo



ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to:
weiyng@ynet.com

I am going to be a mom in April! Do you know of any birthing classes run by foreigners who speak English?

Try La Leche League, illi.org/Beijing, which provides support for expectant mothers. La Leche League's English sessions are on the fourth Friday of every month. The next meeting is January 28. You can meet other mothers-to-be and new mothers to share information. The kids forums on Cityweekend.com.cn and Beijing-kids.com are also useful.

I want to get a full list of common Western and Chinese cooking ingredients and vegetables, fruits and herbs, with photos and names in Chinese characters, pinyin and English.

Do you know any? Also, where can I get organic duck eggs?

Email De Run Wu's owner at drwjyl@tom.com. He runs an organic farm in suburban Beijing has a mailing list for his produce sent out in English and Chinese, with photos. For organic duck eggs, email Gods Grace Farm at wil2bdone@yahoo.com.

My friends' children, who are 12, are visiting Beijing this weekend. They have never seen snow in their life, and Beijing is having its first snowless winter in a while. Where can I take them to see snow?

Take them skiing in places like Nanshan Skiing Resort (nanshanski.com), or ice skating in Houhai or Tuanjiehu (ice will have to suffice in place of snow). If you're looking for other fun things to do, try the Beijing Museum of Natural History (Tianqiao Nan Dajie, Chongwen District; open: 5 am - 5 pm except Monday; tel: 6702 4431). It hosts interesting exhibitions about wild animals from time to time.

I have a design that I want to make into sterling silver. Do you know where I can find people who work with silver wire and make their own jewelry?

Try Linlin's silver jewelry store at Nali Mall on Sanlitun Bar Street or Xijiekou Xicheng District. The one at Xijiekou does not have a clear address: go to the north end of Xijiekou and you will find shops upstairs in a market-like place where people make silver or gold jewelry.

(By Wei Ying)

By He Jianwei

The inner ear includes two important organs: one that helps the body balance and the other an organic microphone.

These functions inspired the work of two young photographers now on exhibit at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA).

Qiu photographs rural landscapes with an emphasis on the balance between economic development and nature. Ren Hang illuminates the underground social lives of young urbanites for the masses.

While their topics could not be more opposite, together they speak with the voice of the vital parts of society often ignored by the masses.



2004070503 Guangdong Pingyuan

"As an artist, I felt I had no future in my village. All I can do is to continue to observe and experience how it changes. Images are a way of preserving the external world of my senses and the inner landscape of myself. And yet, I know that someday I, too, will be landless and dispossessed."



20040703 Guangdong Pingyuan

Inner voice

Two young photographers pick up the pieces



Qiu and Ren have many differences: age, birthplace, style and subject.

Born in 1974 in Guangdong Province, Qiu grew up in a small village in Pingyuan County where he and his family lived as farmers.

When economic development shifted around the country's population in the 1990s, his family moved to Guangzhou. Despite living in the city, he remained attached to the rural life.

"For the past decade, I have been a collector of memories, observing and experiencing the world around me," Qiu said. "Coming to the city from the countryside has made me a passive participant in China's urbanization. I am often torn between the complexities of urban development and my nostalgia for the countryside."

Although he lives in Guangzhou, his family keeps an old house in the village. Every year, he spends several months there.

"I prefer the old days. We were peaceful, comfortable and closer to nature. But today, we don't

respect our land. Most farmland has become deserts or construction sites," he said.

In his black and white photos of southern landscapes, viewers can see distant mountains, fields of burning straw, butterflies, straw hats, the shadows of trees and bare branches.

"Qiu's poetic black and white images are often grainy or blurred, like scenes glimpsed through a pane of rain-spattered glass. They evoke memories of rural southern landscapes and a rapidly disappearing way of life," said Jerome Sans, director of UCCA, at the opening ceremony last Saturday.

One photo shows a neighbor's daughter in a white dress walking the narrow paths of the field.

"Their childhood is different from mine. They can learn more about the outside world than we did. Nature is not their playmate, even though they live in the countryside. All of them look forward to life in the city," he said.

In the age of fast-paced transformation and tremendous social change, the gap between urban and

rural development has widened.

The village, now Qiu's subject, is becoming more distant each day.

"As an artist, I feel I have to continue to observe and experience how it changes," he said. "I want to serve the external world and preserve the inner landscape of myself. And yet, I, too, will be landless and dispossessed."

Thirteen years Qiu's journey took him across the province some 2,500 kilometers. His photos capture the colorful, erotic and sometimes tragic beauty of the countryside.

"I don't like cities because they are too crowded. Tall buildings, traffic jams and pollution are everywhere. People are the exception. They are still kind and honest. This is a place unique," Ren said.

Ren's photographs are not as dramatic as Qiu's. He considers himself too busy to take time for photography. He prefers to travel and explore the world.

"Most of my friends leave the countryside for the city. It's hard for us all to open our eyes to the beauty of the countryside," he said.

e cture life unseen



2004020513 Guangdong Pingyuan Photos provided by UCCA

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spiritual homeland, grows
d no future in my village.
to observe and experience
Images are a way of pre-
of my senses and the
And yet, I know that
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nior, Ren was born in Jilin
meters away. His work
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use they all look the same:
ugly sculptures. But
“The people are what make
of his friends, because
ashful to snap shots of
k a sense of secure: it is
heart to others. I feel

embarrassed whenever I train my lens on someone I don't really know,” he said.

During his shoots, Ren seldom communicate with the models. Most photos reflect his emotion at the moment he pressed the shutter. “I don't have any plan when I start taking pictures. Whenever the moment hits me, I just start shooting. I think that's why a lot of the tension, self-isolation and madness of urban life comes out in my work,” he said.

In his photos, the body is omnipresent – expressive eyes hide behind a veil of flowers, wounds are shown with gauze patches or bodies mesh with artificial hills, manmade lakes, wooden trunks, gardens, climbing vines, bathrooms, bedrooms and floors.

“His young friends pose in sterile apartments, on sofas, cold porcelain toilets or tiled bathroom floors. Sometimes they stand before the windows of their rented house, gazing at the urban landscape outside,” Sans said. “Their expressions feel wistful, apathetic or simply alone.”

Veteran photographer Rong Rong, the curator,

called this exhibition “Inner Ear.” The title was selected when his son began crying because of a severe earache.

“He told me he could hear something inside his ear. I looked up the problem in a medical dictionary and saw it was related to his inner ear. That's when it hit me that the name could be a metaphor for one's inner voice,” said Rong, the founder of Three Shadows Photography Art Center in Caochangdi Village in 2007.

“The works of Qiu and Ren allow us hear more clearly the voices of this generation, and to maintain our sense of balance in an age of unbalance,” Sans said.

For all their differences, Rong says Qiu and Ren share a sensitivity and softness of heart.

“By distancing himself from reality, Qiu helps to keep his memories pure. Ren uses his camera to shock the senses and set the heart pounding. Both of them create resonant images that transmit information straight to our brains,” he said.



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“Most of my friends lack a sense of secure: it's hard for us all to open our heart to others. I feel embarrassed whenever I train my lens on someone I don't really know.”



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Inner Ear
**Qiu & Ren Hang's Photography Exhibition,
curated by Rong Rong**

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 9, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm

Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students, free on Thursdays

Tel: 8459 9269

Sullen soul of New York

Lawrence Block talks hardboiled mystery

By He Jianwei

Last week, 73-year-old novelist Lawrence Block visited Beijing to share his ideas about writing with Chinese readers.

Named a grand master by the Mystery Writers of America, Block is a successful crime novelist, both critically and commercially, with more than 50 books to his credit.

He has won three Edgar and four Shamus awards, the top laurels for detective fiction. His novels have become best-sellers in many languages.

New York from another angle

Block is not only a mystery writer, but also a city writer. Most of his fiction is associated with New York City, where he has lived since age 18, when he moved from Buffalo.

Block is well known for two long-running series – the Matthew Scudder novels and the Bernie Rhodenbarr mysteries.

"My books show New York in different ways. For example, the New York shown in Scudder novels is a much darker New York than what I show in the Rhodenbarr series. Both New Yorks are real," Block said last Saturday at Trends Lounge Bookstore.

His detective fiction is laced with observations of the modern city and the loneliness of urban life.

His Scudder series, currently 16 books, follows its titular anti-hero Matthew Scudder: a divorced, alcoholic ex-cop who has given up the force to work as an unlicensed private investigator.

The character is a reflection of a part of Block's life. When he introduced Scudder in 1976's *The Sins of the Fathers*, Block had just ended his first marriage, taken up drinking and was living alone in a small flat in New York City.

In the 35 years since, both Block and his character have given up alcohol and remarried. "It was a way to rediscover myself through creating the character of Scudder," he said.

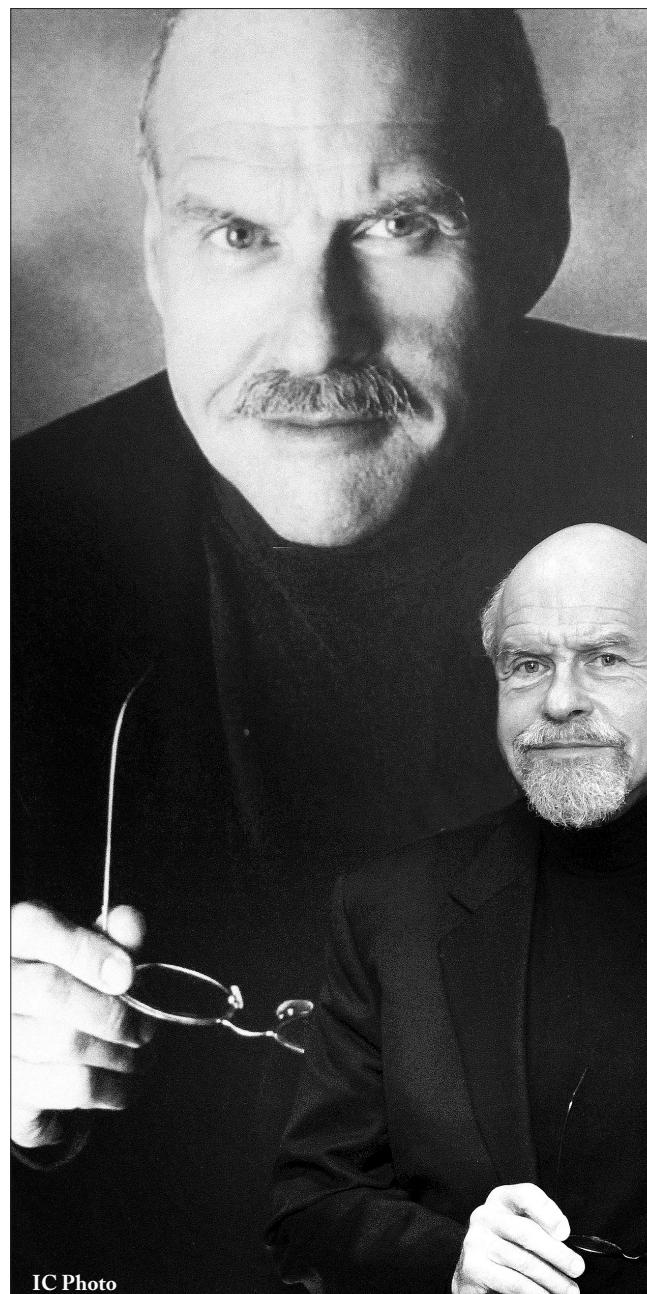
His Rhodenbarr series is much lighter and funnier, following the misadventures of an easy-going and good-natured burglar.

Block inserts many anecdotes drawn from famous writers. In *The Burglar in the Library*, Block imagines a meeting between Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler; in *The Burglar in the Rye*, Rhodenbarr steals some letters between J.D. Salinger and Joyce Maynard, which coincidentally were auctioned off by Salinger's agent without his permission in reality.

"I add these to make books interesting. I just want Rhodenbarr to steal something interesting. If he steals money every time, each book will be the same," he said. "One reader suggested that Rhodenbarr steal a bottle of very rare and expensive wine, but I couldn't have him do that: Scudder might drink it."

Inheriting hardboiled tradition

Block is regarded as one of the few contemporary writers of hardboiled crime fiction, a subgenre distinguished by its unsentimental portrayal of violence and sex, pioneered by Carroll John



IC Photo

"One of the wonderful things of writing is the organic process and the surprises. The writer often winds up surprising himself."

Daly in the mid-1920s, popularized by Hammett and refined by Chandler in the late 1930s.

Block admits to being influenced by those giants, but he said detective novels have evolved much in recent years.

"Like *Sherlock Holmes*, in the hardboiled school, the characters of Chandler and Hammett pretty much stay the same from the time they are written. They are as old in the first book as they are in the last. They don't age and their lives don't change. In many instances, the author doesn't talk much about their lives," he said.

He gave an example of Chandler's protagonist Philip Marlowe. "Chandler showed us what sort of man Marlowe was, but he didn't tell much about his life. We never know about him. Marlowe is a window through whom Chandler saw the world," Block said.

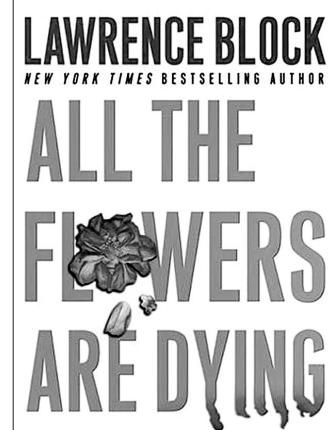
In his Rhodenbarr series, the character is ageless, remaining essentially the same from the 1977 *Burglars Can't be Choosers* to *The Burglar on the Prowl*, his 10th installment in 2004.

Unlike Rhodenbarr, Scudder's life is more developed.

Block thinks character is more important than plot, so he concentrated on depicting Scudder's life beyond his work. "When I started to write Scudder, I felt I was writing about a person," he said. "Sharing the details of his life would enlarge the books and make them more interesting."

"One of the wonderful things of writing is the organic process and the surprises. The writer often winds up surprising himself," he said. "If I didn't allow Scudder to age, I'm sure I'd have stopped writing about him a long time ago."

The 17th Scudder novel will be pub-



lished this year. Block does not know when he will finish the series.

Big names with local readers

In 2006, New Star Press published Block's *Eight Million Ways to Die*, his first release on the Chinese mainland.

In the following four years, 16 Scudder novels and five Rhodenbarrs were published on the mainland.

But Block is most popular among mainland readers for co-writing the screenplay of *My Blueberry Nights*, a 2007 film directed by Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai and starring Norah Jones.

Wong is one of Block's fans. Before they collaborated in *My Blueberry Nights*, they prepared to adapt the Scudder series for film, but the plan was scrapped.

His books are also popular with Tony Leung, winner of Best Actor at Cannes Film Festival in 2000. Leung has told Block many times that he would love to play Rhodenbarr.

"Leung is not suitable for playing the characters I have written. I talked seriously with him about writing him his own character, a Chinese American settling in New York," Block said.



By Wang Yu

Charity stores are a relatively recent phenomenon in China. They came in only three years ago with expats and those returning from abroad. Through their work with domestic NGOs, many are becoming new platforms for bringing together people who want to help and those who need it.

A new online charity store aiming to tap the popularity of business-to-consumer online shopping opened last week. Based in Shanghai, Buy For Two was founded by young men and women who dream of creating a social enterprise.



Spread online

Photographer David Peng first heard of the new online charity store Buy For Two while reading a microblog written by one of the store's donors. When he went to the website, he was taken by the idea.

"I think it's great to run a charity store online. It's easy to operate, like a Taobao store, and it can find new customers from all over the Internet," Peng says.

Buy For Two's website is divided into five sections: shopping, donations, charity funds, charity stocks and a buyers' sharing zone. Though the site has been online for only two weeks, it already has more than 200 products from T-shirts to jackets. Shoppers pay for their purchases using Alipay or other online payment systems.

All its products are donated clothes that are classified by style. The front page shows total donation statistics for each project and the number of buyers.

"It is always fun to buy second-hand clothing. It's a chance to find a unique look and help people at the same time. I also have a shop on Taobao that sells clothes that my friends and I don't need. I'm considering donating some of our merchandise to Buy For Two," says Liu Jia, an office worker.

During its opening week, Buy For Two received donations from more than 30 individuals and organizations. Orders are processed each day, and buyers are allowed to upload photos and share their experiences on the site.

A social enterprise

The rapid success of the site was beyond founder Zhou Xian's expectations.

She and her team began preparing for the launch of Buy For Two last April, half a year after Zhou graduated from the University of London with a degree in public policy and management.

Zhou started her business career in 2004,



The taxidermied deer sold for 500 yuan. The money will be used to build schools for rural children.

Photos provided by Buy For Two

when she returned from Germany to start two companies. When her career was going well, Zhou decided to volunteer for some local charities to educate rural children.

At the suggestion of a friend, she read David Bornstein's *How to Change the World*, a book that she says changed her life. The book elaborates on the concept of a social enterprise – a social mission-driven organization that uses market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose.

"It inspired me to go to the UK to learn more about social enterprises," Zhou says.

Zhou returned to China in September 2009, already imagining her future charity shop in Shanghai. She quickly assembled a core team of six people, including a businessman, former journalist and a co-founder who lives abroad as coordinator.

In the beginning, Zhou planned to introduce the international charity enterprise model to China. However, after months of research, the group abandoned its idea, saying charity shops don't work in China.

"Charity shops are a mature industry in the UK, whereas people in China are unfamiliar with them. They have to be on high streets to attract customers, but with that location comes increased financial pressure for rent," she says.

"But when we noticed the B2C scene growing so fast and that the country has 100 million online shoppers, we decided to transform our idea into an online store," Zhou says.

The team says young Chinese consumers are willing to buy for charity. Like regular charity shops, Buy For Two keeps a percentage of its income as an operating budget and donates the rest to NGOs.

Besides, the site has participated in seven charity projects to protect the environment, install bathrooms for rural children and raise money to help mentally disabled children travel to the capital for a concert in the Bird's Nest.

Users can choose to buy second-hand clothes or donate directly to support the store's efforts.

"By making all of our processes public, the site can win the trust of donors and shoppers. The government and most NGOs are not good at marketing and promoting their efforts. Our site helps connect people who want to do charity with the people who need help," Zhou says.

Future of the business

Zhou has a long-term and detailed business plan, as one would expect of a Shanghai storeowner. Zhou and the other co-founders of Buy For Two see their business as tapping a new opportunity rather than jumping on



the country's current charity fever.

"Compared with traditional charity projects that require time and energy from people in a limited area, anyone can get involved on a website. And by doing this off Taobao, we are always able to add new types of fundraising projects," Zhou says.

As a social enterprise, profit is part of the long-term plan. But that may have to wait until Buy For Two improves its services. A part of the team is working on setting up an offline, dedicated human resource center to standardize how the business runs. There are also plans to cooperate with NGO workshops to develop an original handicraft label.

Besides the buyers' sharing section, the team has also created a charity stock system. Users collect points after each purchase or donation. The system works as an online game to attract users.

But the greatest challenge facing Zhou's enterprise will be convincing ordinary buyers to make a lifestyle change.

"While China's situation is different, what I've seen and learned in the UK gives me confidence. There are 7,000 charity shops there that make 4.5 billion yuan per year," Zhou says. "Last year, Oxfam (a charity store) opened an online store and earned more than 4 million pounds."

Zhou hopes Buy For Two will achieve the same success.

Finding a gift for the Year of Rabbit

By Chu Meng

February 2 marks the beginning of the Year of Rabbit on the lunar calendar. *Beijing Today* has picked out some cool leporine gifts, from traditional handicrafts to digital laptop accessories.



Rock Star Rabbit Pouch, 1,000 yuan

Pink Rivets Rabbit Key Ring with 14-karat gold plating, 1,300 yuan

Photos provided by MCM store Rock Star Rabbit Mobile Phone Bag, 1,000 yuan



Rock Star Rabbit Mobile Phone Bag, 1,000 yuan

MCM Animal Charm Series

German luxury leather goods company MCM's first series of accessories for China in the new year is themed "hip-hop rabbit." In the Animal Charm Series, rivets are applied all over on modernly designed rabbits.

MCM Flagship Store

Where: No. 8 Store, Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8516 2888
Open: 10 am - 9 pm

Old Beijing clay figurines – Tu'er Ye

The Rabbit God, or Tu'er Ye, has long been a symbol of peace and fortune in Beijing folklore. According to legend, a jade rabbit descended from the moon long ago to save a plague-stricken Beijing. Ever since, this rabbit has been commemorated every year on Mid-Autumn Festival.

The figurine, originated from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), has a human body and rabbit lips. Last September it was selected as one of Beijing's pieces of "intangible cultural heritage."

Sheng Tangxuan, a shop that sells traditional Beijing handicrafts, is the only place where people can find original handmade Tu'er Ye figurines in the city.

Shop owner Tang Qiliang, 85, is the fourth generation of his household's rabbit handcraftsmen. He does not design new products anymore, but he dedicates himself to handing down his skills to anyone interested.

The figurines start from 30 yuan but can cost as much as 10,000 yuan. Customers can also pay 10 yuan to design their own Rabbit God from an unpainted clay figurine.

"We have to keep ourselves

up-to-date by catering to modern aesthetics in order to get more young people interested in the traditional handicrafts heritage," Tang said.

A cartoon-like Tu'er Ye, designed by Tang's daughter, Yujie, is currently popular. The cartoon-like figurines differ from traditional styles, which all feature white faces, warrior helmets and armor with flags on the back. Most of the traditional

figurines are riding animals like tigers or elephants, or lotus leaves. The modern figurines, meanwhile, wear suits, play basketball and drive luxury sedans.

Sheng Tang Xuan

Where: 38 Guozijian Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8404 7179
Open: 9 am - 5 pm



The Rabbit God, 30 to 10,000 yuan

CFP Photo



Holland Lop, 400 to 800 yuan

CFP Photo

A real pet rabbit

Coco's Pet Rabbit Shop is one of a few pet stores that only sell rabbits. It sells purebred pet rabbits such as Angoras, with long and wooly hair, Lops, with distinctive floppy ears, and Dutch, with unique color patterns.

The most popular pet rabbit is the English Angora, priced between 200 to 600 yuan. Adults normally weight 2 to 3 kilograms and have soft and silky hair, which requires grooming.

For lazier people, the Holland Lop, priced between 400 to 800 yuan, may be more suitable. They are the smallest among the floppy eared rabbits and weigh about 1.2 to 1.4 kilograms. They are calm and sweet and have short and funny faces.

Coco's Pet Rabbit Shop

Where: No. 69-3, Gulou Dong Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 13671022099
Open: 10 am - 10 pm



The Rabbit God Table Stereo, 120 yuan

Photos provided by I-mu Digital Company



Paper Folding Rabbit Stereo, 580 yuan



Peanut Rabbit Mini Table Stereo, 199 yuan

I-mu Rabbit Mini Table Stereo

Digital gadgets in various rabbit shapes
Where: Room 1909, Tower 2, Dinghao Electronic Market, Haidian District
Te: 8269 6183
Open: 9 am - 4 pm
Online shop: 360buy.com

Pre-order food for Chinese New Year

By Annie Wei

The holidays are always hectic, between trying to finish work and organizing trips and buying gifts. In an effort to make your life easier, *Beijing Today* has scouted restaurants that offer quality New Year's meals, and will introduce some traditional snacks that work great as gifts.



Combo plate of Singapore-style salmon, 258 yuan

Photos by Liu Bo

Fine food at the Summer Palace

New restaurants come and go, but the truly fine ones withstand the test of time. Summer Palace is one of those places, known for Cantonese and Zhejiang cuisine.

The Summer Palace is offering a special four-set menu (380 yuan to 1,380 yuan per person) for Chinese New Year.

The chef recommends a combo plate of Singapore-style abalone (480 yuan) and Singapore-style salmon (258 yuan). Diners can mix salmon with sliced vegetables and fruits, which symbolize prosperity for the next year.

Other recommended dishes include crystal shrimp (168 yuan), one of the most popular dishes in the Summer Palace. The shrimp is shipped live from rivers in the south. Peeling them one by one is among the more time-consuming tasks for the kitchen. They are then tenderized in ice water.

Braised dry oysters with lettuce in a clay pot (238 yuan) is an interesting dish. The light and crispy lettuce lightens the strong flavor of dry oysters. In ordinary Cantonese cuisine, dry oysters are widely used in soup.

Other dishes like deep-fried pigeon (88 yuan), steamed grouper (98 yuan for 50 grams) and braised yimian noodles with dry scallops (78 yuan) are classic Cantonese offerings.

Niangao, prepared from glutinous rice, is another must-have for the holiday because its homonym is "higher year."

In South China, most families have their personal, trustworthy niangao suppliers, either from a vendor in the neighborhood market or a relative who is good at making them. Well-off traditional families like preparing their own ingredients at home and asking reputable hotels to customize their niangao before sending them away as gifts to family friends and relatives.

The Summer Palace's niangao (218 to 318 yuan) are all made of natural ingredients. We recommend the coconut milk (238 yuan) and turnip cake niangao (218 yuan).

At home, one can cut the niangao into appropriate sizes and fry it with a little oil. When the niangao gets slightly crispy on the outside while staying tender inside, it's ready.

A baker at Summer Palace said they used less oil and sugar in making niangao this year.

The restaurant's tangyuan, glutinous rice dumplings with sweet fillings, come in three flavors: red bean, lotus seed and sesame (168 yuan).

The Summer Palace

Where: 2nd floor, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6505 5838

Cost: Average 380 yuan to 1,380 yuan per person

Piehouse – delicious pie delivery

Piehouse is a bakery that exclusively delivers, run by American Mark Huetsch and Wang Liang from Beijing, who have won customers through word-of-mouth.

Started on Thanksgiving 2009, Piehouse is based around Third Ring Road with a dozen staff members. At first, Huetsch and Wang wanted to open a smoothie store but could not find a suitable location. They then turned baking and selling their products online.

"Mark is from the Midwest (US) and grew up in a family that likes baking different things every day," Wang said.

Piehouse is special because both founders like trying new flavors, are selective with raw materials and believe in seasonal eating.

For the coming Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day, strawberries are

in season. The bakery's strawberry cheese pie is one of its best sellers.

Their new product is jasmine chocolate pie (169 yuan for six people), a good example of blending oriental tea culture with Western bakery. It has a strong jasmine aroma and pure chocolate flavor. It also has four distinct layers: pie crust, pudding, cake and mousse.

It's not too sweet, either. Wang said all pies have two sweetness levels because Huetsch has as sweet tooth while Wang prefers catering to locals who prefer less sugar.

We also recommend the strawberry cupcake. Its frosting is made by blending fresh strawberries and cream cheese to achieve a natural and slightly sweet flavor.

Piehouse also takes customized order. A wedding cupcake for 100 people costs 1,500 yuan and up.

Piehouse has several competitors, including 21cake.com, leparfait.com.cn and waffleboy.com.cn. Wang said the cost of delivery is the same as renting a place.

Though she works every day from 6 am to 10 pm, Wang said she is happy with Piehouse's growth. "It's like taking tests in school," she said. "There are always people who are smarter than you and do better than you. But as long as you do your best, you will get what you pay for."

Piehouse

Website: piehouse.com.cn/shop60559838.taobao.com

Open: 9 am – 9 pm

Tel: 5166 4464

Please order five hours ahead; customers within Fourth Ring Road can enjoy free delivery.

A wedding cupcake for 100 people, starting from 1,500 yuan
Photo provided by Piehouse



Niangao, 218 to 318 yuan



Strawberry cupcake, seasonal
Photo provided by Piehouse

Where to learn New Year cooking from star blogger

Jing's kitchen

The store owner Li Jing learned baking in New Zealand and started her baking blog in December 2008. Her blog has reached 13.5 million clicks. Her Taobao store, open since September 2009, sells ingredients, kitchen ware, yogurt and honey from New Zealand. Li also opened a coffee store in Haidian District. She teaches how to cook special Chinese New Year food at her coffee store.

Where: 800 meters southwest side of Lianxiangqiao, Haidian District

Open: 9 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 6212 5105

Website: shop59273452.taobao.com/

Wenyi's gourmet kitchen

Star blogger Ma Wenyi's clean and spacious kitchen is popular with well-educated mothers in town and is a regular venue for food companies' new product launches.

Where: Room 2006, Building 2, Xiangsong compound, Huguangqiao, Chaoyang District

Open: Wednesday to Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm

Tel: 8476 5173

Website: blog.sina.com.cn/wenyi

A dialogue with nature

By He Jianwei

"Nature" can exist in any manmade space, said H.D. Schrader, a German sculptor and conceptualist artist.

In his latest exhibition, *High Ladder*, at Today Art Museum, Schrader has created installations and videos that engage a dialogue with nature.

In the museum's hallway are two 10-meter-high red ladders. The artist created this installation after traveling to rural areas of Zhejiang Province last year and seeing the relationship between bamboo and traditional culture.

Bamboo has inspired artists and scholars for centuries. Countless paintings and poems have been created to express admiration for the purity and elegance of bamboo.

"Bamboo represents nature in traditional Chinese gardens," art critic Huang Du said. "Schrader paints them in red, making them resemble structures. He proposes that humans will die if nature dies."

In his three videos *Ocean Watchman*, *Jungle Watchman* and *Sky Watchman*, Schrader recreates a "nature" in the museum. The hall reverberates with sounds found in nature, such as bats and birds, or rustling tree branches.

In *Jungle Watchman*, red or black geometrical objects,



such as triangles, squares and rectangles, are integrated with the jungle.

The geometrical objects represent a nightingale's nest, bat cave and feeder, forcing viewers to view familiar shapes in different ways. The artist uses Johannes Brahms' "To the Nightingale" as background music.

"The objects can be seen as ... a warning," Huang said. "In a time when natural disasters are occurring regularly and affecting more people and places, these works show us the major dangers that our generation faces."

Photo provided by Today Art Museum

H.D. Schrader – High Ladder

Where: Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baizhan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 16, daily except Monday, 10 am

– 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 5876 9804



Saturday, January 22

Exhibition Liu Wei's Solo Exhibition

Liu combines traditional wash with Western abstract painting.

Where: Aye Gallery, Room 601, Building 3, Yonghe Garden, 3 Dongbinhe Lu, Andingmen, Dongcheng District

When: Until February 20, daily except Monday, 10 am

– 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8422 1726

Movie



Hachi (2009)

The film is about a faithful dog, Hachi, who arrives daily at a station to meet his master. When his master

passes away, Hachi waits for nearly a decade.

Where: Lady Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6270 1928

Nightlife



Fuego

The first show of Spanish dance group Carmen Mata's will demonstrate the flamenco, with its fast steps, passionate music and gorgeous visual effects.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Center Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-980 yuan

Tel: 6831 6677

Upcoming

Nightlife

Beijing Alchemists

Combining British, US and Asian blues and folk traditions, the Beijing Alchemists present a mixture of original songs and covers to create a magical musical experiment.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmian-

Dongcheng District

When: January 27, 9 pm

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6401 4611

Stage in February

Concert

Leon Fleisher Piano Recital

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 4, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

A Tribute to Teresa Teng

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 8, 7:30 pm

Admission: 100-1,080 yuan

Tel: 5166 1145

Sun Yingdi Piano Recital

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 200-280 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Andras Schiff Piano Recital

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 27, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-680 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Dance

Dance of Desire

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-380 yuan

Tel: 6551 8058

Drama

The Life Opinions of Two Dogs

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-380 yuan

Tel: 6551 8058

Out of Order

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 19-21, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-30 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Opera

Verdi's Opera: La Traviata

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 13-17, 7:30 pm

Admission: 100-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

Friday, January 21

Exhibition Trap

Eight artists try to show different ways people become ensnared by life.

Where: Art ISSUE Project, A1 Beigao, Cuigezhuang Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 30, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6434 0266

Movie



Sunday, January 23

**Exhibition
Will You Miss Me When I Burn?**

This exhibition displays the art of Guan Xiao, Robbin Heyker, Wei Honglei and Zhou Xiang, showing their interactions in the past six months.

Where: C Space, Red No. 1 – C1 & C2, Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 27, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Ghost Town (2008)

This Chinese film tells the story of the people who live in a poor, lonesome village.

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 15 yuan

Tel: 8459 9269

Nightlife

The Amazing Insurance Salesmen

Comprising Zhang Si'an, lead vocalist from France; Mao Mao, drummer from China; and Maikel, bassist from the Netherlands, this band combines jazz, blues and classical music.

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 9 pm

Admission: free

Tel: 6265 3177

Movie

Rear Window (1954)

This film, starring James Stewart as a photographer who spies on his neighbors while recuperating from a broken leg, is considered by many filmgoers, critics and scholars to be one of director Alfred Hitchcock's best.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shiqi Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 6 pm

Admission: 25 yuan, includes free soft drink and popcorn.

Tel: 8404 4166

Nightlife

Zi Yu

Canadian musician Ember Swift, whose Chinese name is Zi Yu, performs jazz, blues, funk and folk songs in both Chinese and English.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 30 yuan advance purchase, 40 yuan at the door

Tel: 6401 4611

(By Pang Xiaoqiao)



By Li Zhixin

Beijing Municipal Center for Disease Control (CDC) reminded residents to be on alert for the H1N1 Type A flu virus, which came back with a vengeance last week as the city entered its peak flu season.

The Municipal Public Health Bureau released a list of 30 hospitals where people can buy Jinhua Qinggan Keli, a Chinese medicine used to prevent flu, on Thursday.

There were six reports of high concentrations of flu infections in the city. "Three were reported in kindergartens, two in schools and one in a press group. No patients have died, and only one who had H1N1 Type A flu was listed in serious condition," said Pang Xinhua, deputy director of the CDC.

Pang said influenza control will be difficult this winter due to the drought. With Spring Festival quickly approaching, the mass human movement may contribute to the rapid spread of the virus.

"But both the seasonal flu and H1N1 Type A influenza are preventable, treatable and controllable. The most important thing to do is avoid contact and seek treatment quickly. Focus on building up your immune system," said Li Fengying, a doctor at Beijing Chaoyang Hospital's nutrition department.

Many people take medicine to prevent seasonal flu or H1N1 Type A virus. But for basic illnesses like flu, it can be more effective to boost your immune system by making smart choices about what to eat.

Smart food choices may help fight flu

Here are some foods which can help prevent flu — even H1N1 — to a certain extent:

1. Beef

Beef is an important source of zinc, which can boost the immune system. Zinc promotes the growth of white blood cells and helps the body guard against viruses, bacteria and other harmful substances. Even a slight zinc deficiency will increase your risk of suffering from infectious disease, so eating beef can help combat both colds and the flu.

2. Yogurt

Probiotic bacteria in yogurt can protect the intestinal tract by preventing the growth of pathogenic bacteria. In addition, some bacteria in yogurt also promote the growth of new white blood cells.

3. Ginger

Ginger has been used to promote circulation, eliminate fatigue and increase appetite. In traditional medicine, ginger dispels cold, promotes digestion and detoxifies. It can help reduce fevers and headaches. Morning is the best time to eat ginger or drink a decoction of it.

4. Carrots and sweet potatoes

A shortage of vitamin A puts the respi-



CFP Photo

ratory and gastrointestinal mucosa at risk of contracting H1N1. Carrots and sweet potatoes are the best vegetables to eat for vitamin A and carotene. They are also low in calories.

5. Garlic

Eat several pieces of raw garlic every day and add some garlic when cooking dishes to help ward off influenza. People who regularly eat garlic have a reduced risk of colon cancer and gastric disease.

6. Peppers

Peppers are rich in vitamin C, iron, calcium, phosphorus and vitamin B. Every 100 grams of fresh peppers contain 144 milligrams of vitamin C. Vitamin C can help fight atherosclerosis and lower cholesterol, but excessive consumption of hot peppers may be dangerous for people with hypertension or tuberculosis.

7. Mushrooms

Although mushrooms are delicious and rich in nutrition, few people know they are also effective at boosting immunity. Mushroom can boost metabolism, which also helps to boost white blood cell production.

8. Fish and shellfish

Oysters, lobsters, crabs, clams and other seafood products contain selenium,

which can increase the number of immune proteins and help the body fight the influenza virus. Fish can also help produce a large number of anti-influenza cells to improve the immune system.

9. Oats and barley

Oats and barley contain glucan, which has anti-bacterial and antioxidant functions. Eating oats and barley daily can enhance immunity, accelerate healing and help antibiotics to be more effective.

10. Chicken soup

Chicken soup is not only tasty, but also has the ability to improve the body's immunity. Chicken or chicken soup contains essential amino acids. Having a bowl of chicken soup when you get sick can ease muscle aches and weakness caused by colds.

11. Tea

Drink five cups of green or black tea a day for two weeks to start your body producing a large number of anti-viral proteins to guard against influenza. Drinking tea can also prevent food poisoning, infection and some symptoms of tuberculosis and malaria.

"But avoid sugar. It paralyzes the immune system each time you consume it," Li said.

ABCs of flu prevention

Take an active role in stopping the spread of H1N1 Type A flu by following the steps below:

1. Wash your hands frequently.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to remove bacteria and viruses. Wash before and after eating, after leaving a public place, after using the washroom, after coughing and sneezing and after touching surfaces that may have been contaminated. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer is also

effective at killing viruses.

2. Keep your hands away from your face

In most cases, the H1N1 virus enters the body through the eyes, nose or mouth.

3. Sanitize your surroundings

Cell phones, keyboards, light switches, doorknobs and other surfaces can become contaminated with all kinds of bacteria and viruses. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of these surfaces with household disinfectants can help. Viruses can live on hard

surfaces for up to 48 hours.

4. Exercise regularly

Identify sources of stress in your life and minimize them. Stay physically active to keep your immune system strong.

5. If you get sick, stay home

If you think you have the flu, stay home from school or work until your symptoms are gone. If your symptoms worsen, see a doctor.

6. Get immunized

Get a flu shot.

Popular play mats may endanger children's health

By Li Zhixin

In late 2010, Belgium and France passed laws banning the sale of the soft foam puzzle-piece play mats following tests revealing the presence of formamide, a reproductive and developmental toxin.

The International Food Packaging Association Beijing Office (IFPA) said the mats sold domestically also contain this toxin and are harmful to children.

Formamide can damage children's skin, mucosa and eyes. It can also damage their livers and kidneys, as well as digestive and nervous systems. Long-term effects include weakened immunity, said Xu Ronghua, a doctor at Beijing Children Hospital.

She said children younger than 3 are very sensitive to the external environment, as their skin is thin and tender. Contact with chemicals is one of the most common causes of childhood skin diseases.

"Don't allow toddlers to be exposed to plastics for too long. Stick to wool and cotton blankets. If you have wood floors, there is no reason to put down a plastic mat," Xu said.

Soft foam mats are seen in homes, kindergartens, rec centers and restaurant play areas. "We sell more than 400 to 600 pieces per month in our store alone," said Liu Min, a shop assistant at a local Tiankelong Supermarket.

To prevent children injury, many parents and school administrators choose to pad their floors with puzzle-piece mats. "The marble floor is cold and hard, so I think it is safer and more comfortable for the children if we put down some kind of mat," said Yang Lihong, a young mother.

Although many young mothers consider eco-friendliness, few can tell which mats or brands are actually environmentally friendly. "All we have to go on is the retailer's advice," Yang said.

Play mats are made of ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) and poly ethylene (PE), normally safe and tasteless chemicals. However, to make the mats extra soft many manufacturers add formamide, a common swelling agent. "When too much is added, the mats take on an odd odor," said Dong Jinshi, the secretary general of IFPA.

However, there is no law regulating acceptable formamide levels in plastic mats and no product description to warn what levels could be dangerous.

"If you choose to put down soft foam puzzle-piece mats for your children, be sure to smell the product. The stronger its odor, the more formamide it contains," Dong said. "And don't use mats immediately after you take them home. Put them in a well-ventilated place for at least one to two months to make sure the harmful substances dissipate as much as possible."

Ice hiking and frozen falls in Double Dragons Gorge

By Zhang Dongya

Winter freezes over rivers, ponds, lakes and waterfalls. It's this last item, which remains suspended majestically from cliffs and mountaintops, that attracts people to Shuanglongxia, the Double Dragons Gorge on the outskirts of Beijing.

Here, visitors can see the most incredible ice waterfalls in Beijing. Two big frozen waterfalls and nearly a hundred smaller ones are along the gorge. Visitors can rent crampons and walk around this icy world.



At the entrance of the scenic spot is a sightseeing train with open carriages.



It takes about five hours to hike to the waterfalls and back.



There are many long icy roads, providing ice-hiking enthusiasts a lot of fun.



Icicles can be seen on the side of a big dam.

Located in Mentougou District, the Double Dragons Gorge was developed only recently by locals in Huocun, or Fire Village, in Zhaotang Town in 2001.

Legend has it that Zhaotang Town, as the name implies, was once a canteen that served monks vegetarian food. There was a Lingyue Temple in the town that has since been torn down.

The gorge is located to the south of Fire Village. There are miles of streams, nearly 100 waterfalls and dense forests. It has been dubbed Little Jiuzhaigou, after the famous scenic spot in Sichuan Province.

Ice hiking

The first attraction upon entering is a miniature sightseeing train with open carriages. Characters painted on the side of the locomotive reads "Dongfang Hong," or "The East is Red" – a folk song that lauds Chairman Mao.

The track is narrower than the average rail and extends 10 kilometers. Trains arrive about every three minutes, and takes about 10 minutes to run from one end of the track to the other.

One of the veteran drivers, a local of Fire Village, warned visitors not to jump onto the tracks. "The train requires several seconds to stop after braking," he said.

Getting off the train, visitors take a long flight of stairs to a large ice lake where pedaled boats are docked on one side. This time of year, the ice is thick enough for walking and skating.

Underneath the ice, rainbow trout swim in water that is about 18 C year-round, according to manager Li Lianhong.

Icicles can be seen on the side of a big dam. Some resemble animals like sheep and rabbits.

From the dam, more frozen falls and sheets of ice can be seen along the path. Visitors are advised to put on crampons to walk on ice, with distinctive crunching sounds beneath their feet. Near a cable bridge, the ice road is quite long, providing ice-hiking enthusiasts a lot of fun.

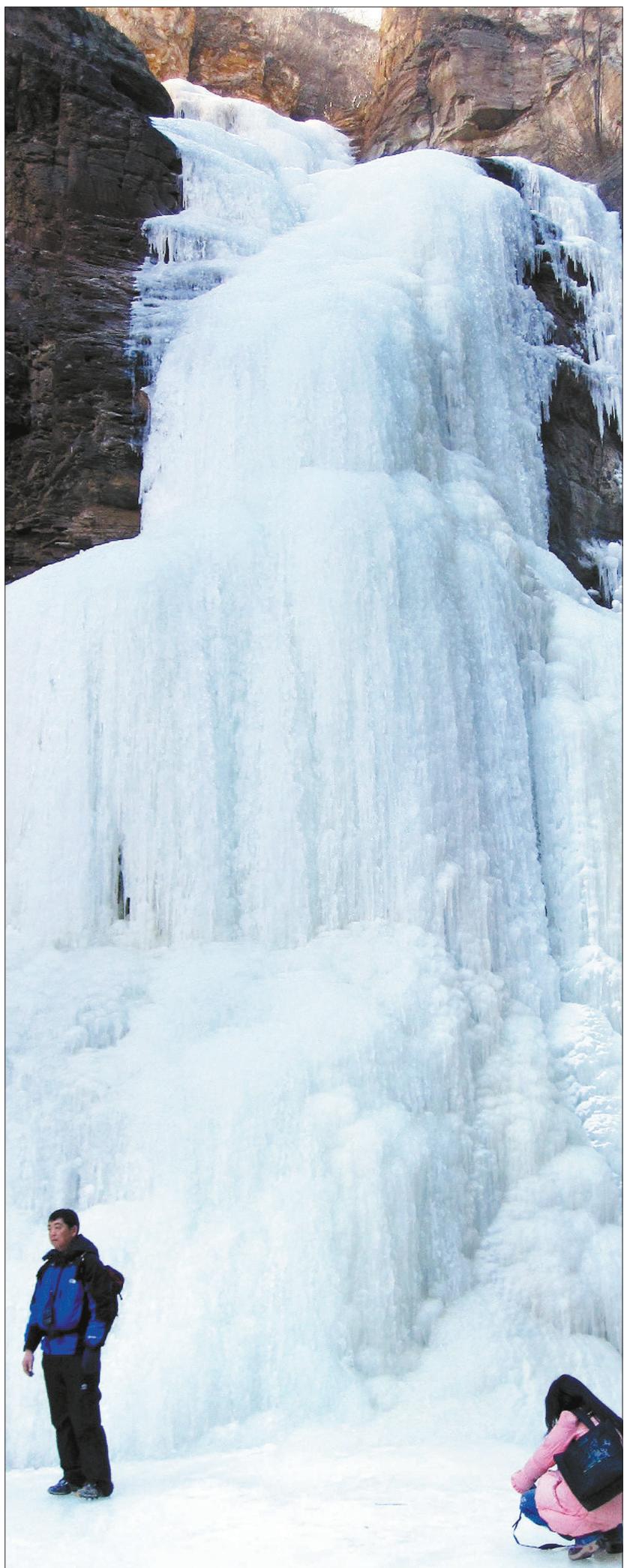
Some sections are melting a little under the sun, but not enough to pose danger.

Along the hike are many fields with stone walls surrounding them. Li said the walls were built during the war against the Japanese. The deep ridges were built so that villagers could conceal themselves.

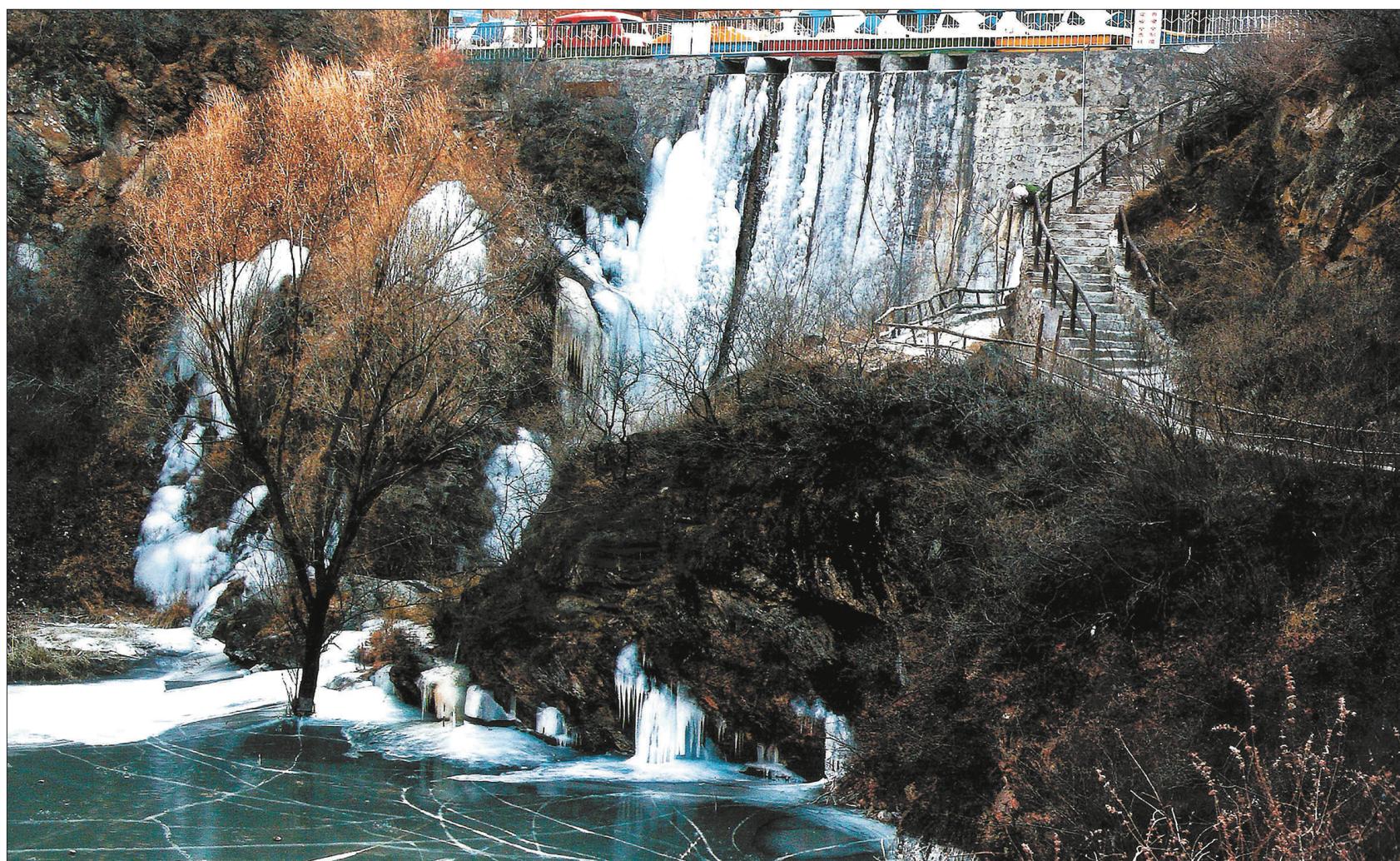
These days, the fields aren't used for anything. During the autumn, they are littered with fallen leaves.

Occasionally, one will see small patches of moss under the trees. The vivid green color is a sign that life thrives despite the climate.

Continued on page 21...



The first big ice waterfall in the gorge resembles a white belt.
Photos by Mockingbird



Many small frozen falls and sheets of ice can be seen along the hike.

Photo provided by Double Dragons Gorge Scenic Spot

...continued from page 20

Frozen waterfalls

From afar, the first big ice waterfall resembles a white belt. It is 30 meters high and five meters wide.

Li said the waterfall started to freeze in early December.

"I think one interesting thing is, in the winter you can take a picture standing underneath the waterfall," one visitor said.

Visitors usually eat lunch at this first waterfall. A large platform with tables and benches has been built beside the fall, where visitors can rest and eat.

The second big frozen waterfall, which is a two-hour hike away, is 10 meters wide and more splendid. Many layers of ice have formed, evidence of the violence and grandeur of the moving water during warmer times.

There are more small frozen falls and roads for hiking in the area. Since they are at a higher altitude, they are steeper and more slippery.

The waterfalls remain frozen until May or June. In the early summer, when the trees and grass have regained their color, the frozen falls in the green gorge are an incredible sight.

Double Dragons Gorge

Where: Fire Village, Zhaitang Town, Mentougou District

Tel: 8869 1213

Open: 8 am – 6 pm

Admission: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for sightseeing train

Getting there: Take Subway Line 1 to Pingguoyuan station, and transfer to Bus 929 or 929 branch line to Huocun (Fire Village) stop. Take a coach to the scenic spot or walk there in half an hour.

If driving, take West Fifth Ring Road and exit at Lianshi Xi Lu, then head toward Mentougou and turn right at Shimengying Huandao. Go toward Zhaitang along 109 State Road. Turn left toward Double Dragons Gorge Scenic Spot after you reach Fire Village.

Accommodations

There are dining halls and restaurants at the entrance of the scenic spot that serve local dishes, including village chickens and mushrooms from the mountain. Since the hike to the waterfalls and back will take about five hours, you should have lunch in the mountain.

All the stores are closed during the winter.

Take a gas stove and vacuum flask so you can prepare hot food and water. Instant noodles and mutton are highly recommended. They can also warm your body.

All hotels are closed during the winter.

Note

1. The temperature is about minus-5 C during the day, and -10 to -18 C in the evening. Dress in layers!

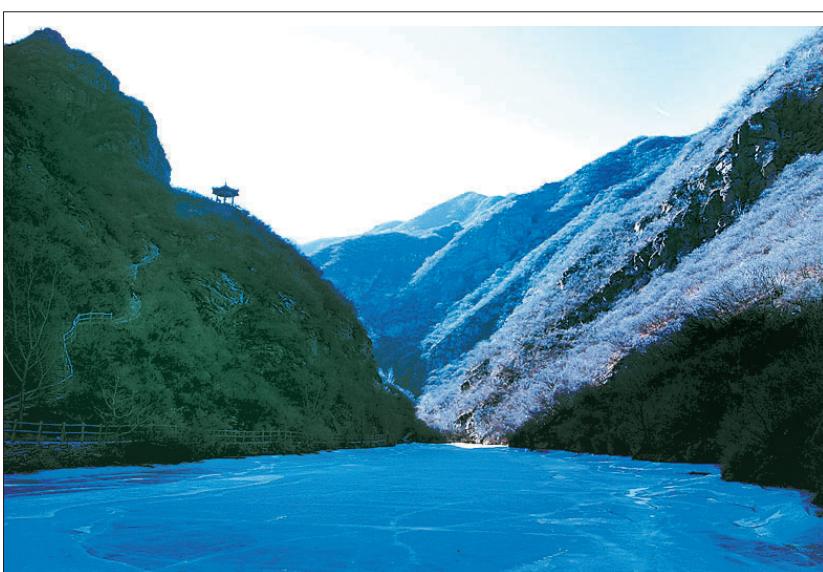
2. Crampons are recommended, as there are several stretches of road that are icy and slippery. The scenic spot offers crampons, which cost 5 yuan to rent.



Visitors like to take pictures while standing underneath the waterfall.



The second big frozen waterfall, 10 meters wide, is more splendid.



The gorge is located south of Zhaitang Town, once a canteen that served monks vegetarian food.

Photos by Mockingbird

Hotel

Kerry Center Hotel collects donations for Dandelion



On Christmas Eve 2010, Shangri-La's Kerry Center Hotel, Beijing invited the Dandelion School Choir to perform at the Grand Ballroom with veteran singers such as Zheng Xu Lan to raise funds for the school.

Caroling continued in the hotel lobby and Coffee Garden for 15 minutes, as students impressed guests with their best songs.

"As a company that advocates corporate social responsibility, this charity event is part of our regular events that aim to convey the hotel's best wishes for the season and to communicate our care to the needy," said Johnson Wong, the hotel's general manager.

Dandelion School is a charitable organization for migrant workers and is the first and only approved middle school established to offer affordable, quality education specifically to children from low-income families.

Weekend De-Stress



At the end of a busy week, escape with your family to Traders Upper East Hotel, Beijing for just 730 yuan per night single or 830 yuan per night double in a Superior Room.

The includes a complimentary buffet breakfast at Cafe Noir; complimentary shuttle bus to Lady's Street, SOLANA, Lufthansa Center and Sanlitun Village; free access to the fully equipped gym, indoor heated swimming pool, whirlpool, steam bath and sauna; and late check-out until 4 pm.

Where: Trader Upper East Hotel, 2 Dongsi-huan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: year-round
Cost: from 730 yuan per night
Tel: 5907 8888

Shangri-La Hotels to open a new site in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Asia announced the purchase of six acres of government land facing the Galle Face green promenade, a prominent landmark in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The new location will be a multi-use complex with high-end retail facilities, deluxe apartments and a 500-key luxury hotel to open in early 2014. The purchase marks the entry of the hotel group into The Pearl of the Indian Ocean.

Shangri-La is also planning a second property, a 300-key city resort on 40 hectares of land in Hambantota, the country's southern coast, to open in 2013.

"Sri Lanka is a country of unsurpassed natural beauty, rich in cultural heritage, and above all it is well recognized for its warm and hospitable population. Its government is fully committed to rebuilding the economy following three decades of conflict, and we believe Shangri-La will be able to assist in positioning the country as a prime global tourist destination. Both hotels fit into our group's ongoing plans to link the Indian subcontinent and our South East Asia developments," said Greg Dogan, president and chief executive officer of Shangri-La International Hotel Management.

Airline

Jetstar wins WTA partnership for Asia Pacific

Low-fare leader Jetstar was named the first ever official airline partner of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and its tournaments across the Asia Pacific region until 2013.

As Asia Pacific's largest low-fare airline, Jetstar has a growing Pan Asian network including new routes to China, Singapore, Vietnam and Australia.

Singapore's leading female tennis player, Stefanie Tan, joined Jetstar to unveil the partnership in Singapore to kick off a series of events across the region. The ceremony in Sydney was marked by a larger-than-life projection onto the night sky-

line of leading tennis players Samantha Stosur and Jelena Dokic.

WTA tournaments attract the world's most prominent female tennis players, who will join tennis fans in flying to a number of primary destinations to attend tournaments in Australia and New Zealand with future events in Japan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The WTA is the world's leading professional organization for women with more than 2,200 players representing 96 nations at the WTA's 53 events and four Grand Slams in 33 countries.

Dining



Hopfenstube reopens under new management

Serving four classic and traditional beers from its in-house microbrewery with traditional German dishes made from the freshest of ingredients, Hopfenstube is bound to be an unforgettable culinary experience.

Stop in for an 88-yuan business lunch that includes an all-you-can-eat salad bar, soup of the day, and your choice of a main course.

Where: Hopfenstube, Crowne Plaza Beijing Chaoyang U-Town, 3 Sanfeng Bei Li, Chaoyang District

When: 11 am – 2 am next day
Tel: 5909 6683

Hatsroomie and Roomsune in a culinary collaboration

With these two in the kitchen, expect the unexpected and nothing less than the epic. Two chefs at two restaurants for two nights and one special eight-dish original dinner menu.

Be sure to reserve your seats early.

Where: Hatsune, S8-30 Building 8, South Area, Village, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District; ROOMBeijing, 301-302, Park Life 3F, Beijing Yintai Center, 2 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm, January 25 at Hatsune; January 26 at ROOMBeijing

Cost: 488 yuan (food); 588 yuan (food and drink)
Contact: Hatsune, 13240114868; ROOMBeijing, 8517 2033



Japanese paper hotspot in Honzen

Chef Tani has prepared a trio of replenishing Japanese "paper" hotpots to lift your spirits this winter. Choose from a seafood hotspot brimming with fresh scallops, shrimp and snappers or a "shabu shabu" with tender rib-eye beef or fillets of salmon with miso. Mix and match your choice of soups and dipping sauces for the perfect flavor.

Where: Honzen, Kempinski Hotel, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28
Cost: 128 yuan per serving and subject to 15 percent surcharge
Tel: 6465 3388 ext. 4220
Email: restaurant.beijing@kempinski.com

(By Jackie Zhang)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Your 2011 Geilivable or ungelivable?

By Han Manman

What was the hottest word in China last year? Nine out of 10 Chinese netizens will tell you it's the Chinglish word "geilivable," literally meaning "giving power" or "cool."

"The word might be a weird and haphazard combination of sounds for people who never surf the Internet, but to a country with 420 million netizens, it's meaningful," said Chen Jie, a 28-year-old Beijing native. "It's even gradually becoming part of the mainstream social language."

Chen, who works for the marketing department of a Forbes 500 enterprise, said her 2010 was really "geilivable." She not only got promoted last year, but also found her Mr. Right.

"Geilivable" combines the Chinese characters for "giving strength" (*geili*) with an English suffix. It can be modified with the prefix un – to mean "not cool at all" – ungelivable.

The word has even been used in serious media reports.

In November, the *People's Daily* carried a news story with the headline, "Jiangsu geilivable cultural province."

Although some netizens remarked "geilivable" should be used as an adjective, not a verb, they hailed this usage as progress for the stodgy newspaper.

Geilivable is just one of many Chinglish words popular among netizens. "Niubility" (from *niubi*, meaning excellent) and "smilence" – meaning to smile and keep silent – are frequently used.

More Chinese people are taking Internet slang and incorporating them into real life.

About 65 percent of respondents of a State Language Commission survey said they believe cyber language can be used in daily life if it is standardized.

"Speaking Chinglish was once considered shameful for the Chinese, but now it's getting more and more fashionable, even for some foreigners," said Zheng Mengjuan, one of the report's compilers.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Flush the Closet Pot, Please



Photo by Terry Boyd-Zhang



According to the report, 30 percent of people said cyber language is more charming than traditional language in regards to being "fashionable and unique," and that certain words should appear in Chinese dictionaries.

"I used to believe only teenagers were fond of using cyber language in real life

to show their rebelliousness and make themselves stand out," Chen said. "But one day I found words like 'geilivable' had unconsciously become a part of my daily language."

"In fact, I think no word better describes my feelings about last year," she said. "I really love the expression."

my Canadian version of the language may be lacking. In cyberspace, I came across a lot of references to "closet pot head" – hmm – but not "closet pot" as referring to something you'd find in a bathroom. Perhaps the sign should say "chamber pot."

The Chinese is much simpler. Qing (please) *fangshui* (literally: put some water) *chongxi* (flush and wash). "Please flush" would be enough. Chamber pots don't have a flusher anyway.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week

- 1. I don't want people think that this is a comparison between Western and Eastern ways of life.**

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): I recently came across several sentences in which the writer forgot to use the infinitive sign "to," which is absolutely necessary. This is one of the cases. It should be: I don't want people to think that this is a comparison between Western and Eastern ways of life. In English, there are only a few verbs – such as have, let, see, hear, help, make – that can go without the infinitive "to" if they are followed by a verb. Similarly, here is another erratic sentence of the same nature: If the hospital administration can encourage doctors exercise self-discipline, the IV abuse can be well controlled. Where is the mistake? The sign! It should be: If the hospital administration can encourage doctors to exercise self-discipline, the IV abuse can be well controlled. Such a small matter can make your writing seem fairly unprofessional.

Terry Boyd-Zhang (TBZ): I am very sorry to students of English that such a small word can make such a big difference, but it is true that leaving out "to" can make your writing sound unpolished. Think of it something like a student of Chinese leaving a critical brush stroke off a character.

- 2. It has launched a pilot program allow residents to make direct investment overseas.**

ZS: Here is a similar mistake to the previous one. I find people are particularly liable to make the mistake with the verb "to allow." Please remember that the verb to allow is not among the verbs that permit the omission of the infinitive sign "to" if it is followed by another verb. Let's see some examples: He allowed some friends to use his private library. He missed her more than he would allow himself to admit. Let's allow him to be a genius. The residents allow dogs to roam the streets. In the previous cases, the infinitive sign "to" is necessary to serve as the object of the verb to allow. So, with the sample sentence, it should be: It has launched a pilot program to allow residents to make direct investment overseas.

TBZ: First, (basic) infinitives; next, perfect infinitives; then, gerunds (nouns that end in -ing). Yikes! What is a student of English to do? Slow down, start at the beginning and work your way along. Do lots of extra reading; read the newspaper, starting with the shortest articles you can find. After that, it's on to the script of your favorite TV show or subtitles of a movie you enjoy, keeping in mind the difference between spoken slang and professional written English. Sure, it won't be easy, but you can do it.

- 3. This has led serious problems in food supply.**

ZS: When the verb "to lead" is used intransitively, it may mean to act as guide, to effect a certain result or to form a channel or route. I give you some concrete examples. We all know the proverb: All roads lead to Rome. The drain led to a common sewer. Hard work leads to success. The frequent outbreaks led to civil war. Self-examination may lead us to a knowledge of ourselves. He leads the conversation to a controversial topic. The love of pleasure leads men into vices. So, you cannot possibly say: This has led serious problems in food supply. The correct way to say it should be: This has led to serious problems in food supply. The preposition "to" is absolutely necessary in this usage.

TBZ: English grammar overload has led to eyes popping and brain hemorrhaging! For some lucky students, the holidays are (or will soon be) here. But don't abandon your studies completely, otherwise you might forget the progress you have already made. That may lead to difficulties when you return. Keep it up! To improve oneself, to allow for progress – keep the basis firm.



Scene 1

(Intro)

Kathy's voice over: My name is Kathy H. I'm 28 years old. I've been a carer for nine years. And I'm good at my job. My patients always do better than expected and are hardly ever classified as agitated, even if they're about to make a donation.

I'm not trying to boast (1), but I feel a great sense of pride in what we do. Carers and donors have achieved so much. That said, we aren't machines.

In the end, it wears you down (2). I suppose that's why I now spend most of my time not looking forward but looking back, to The Cottages and Hailsham, and what happened to us there. Me, Tommy and Ruth.

Scene 2

(Kathy, Tommy and Ruth leave Hailsham and move to The Cottages before their first donation.)

Tommy (T): Chrissie and Rod are pretty obsessed about this rumor, aren't they?

Kathy (K): About the deferrals?

T: Mmm ... I was thinking about it again last night, and if this rumor's true it might explain a few things.

K: Such as?

T: Well, The Gallery, for instance. We never got to the bottom of it (3), what The Gallery was for. Pictures, poetry and sculpture. Say something about yourself. That's the whole point about art, isn't it? It says what's inside of you. It reveals your soul.

K: Yeah. So?

T: Suppose for a second that the rumor is true. That there is a special arrangement for Hailsham students, if they're in love. Well, there would have to be some kind of way to decide if couples are telling the truth and not just lying to put off their donations.

That's what The Gallery could be for. In The Gallery they have everything about us they need to know. So if we say that we're in love, they can look into our souls and they can see. They'll know if it's real love or if it's just a lie.

K: That's a strange idea, Tommy.

T: What? No, no. I don't think that's any stranger than any other idea.

K: And didn't Miss Lucy say that making art for The Gallery wasn't even important?

T: Yes. But look what happened to her.

K: Are you thinking of applying? With Ruth?

T: No. It wouldn't work.

Movie of the week

Never Let Me Go looks like a sci-fi movie at first glance, but proves to be one of those more complicated movies that transcends genre. In this case, it's a love triangle between three young clones.

Keira Knightley again shows her versatility as an actor in this less-restrictive indie production. But the lead Carey Mulligan stands out for the soul she brings to her character. Andrew Garfield, who rose to fame in *The Social Network*, appears to get another stellar performance under his belt before taking on the next Spiderman film in 2012.

Synopsis

Based on the novel of by Japanese-born British author Kazuo Ishiguro, the movie tells the story of Kathy, Tommy and Ruth, who live in a world and a time that appears disturbingly familiar. But in this world, the three are clones raised to provide donor organs.

The three spend their childhood at an English boarding school. When they leave the shelter of the school and their fate is revealed, they must confront the feelings of love, jealousy and betrayal that threaten to pull them apart.



K: Why?

T: Because ... you forgot that you got lots of stuff into The Gallery over the years, and if I applied they wouldn't have anything to go on.

K: It's all just rumors and theories.

T: Yeah, I know ...

Scene 3

(Kathy, Tommy and Ruth are separated. Many years later, Kathy meets Ruth, who has given two donations and is now dying.)

Ruth (R): I've been keeping tabs on you (4) over the years. And Tommy, too.

K: What do you hear about Tommy?

R: That he's done his second donation, too, and apparently he's doing very well on it. Apparently he's in better shape than some after their first donation.

K: Good old Tommy. I'm not surprised.

R: Are you surprised at me? I expect I look a bit broken, Kath. It's OK. I don't think I'd want to survive my third donation, anyway. You hear things, don't you?

K: What kind of things?



R: Oh, you know. How, maybe, after the fourth donation, even if you've technically completed, you're still conscious in some sort of way. And then you find out that there are more donations, plenty of them. No more recovery centers. No more carers. Just watching and waiting. Till they switch you off. I don't think I fancy that.

Is it the end of the day already? Do you know, it's funny, I think I've thought about you every day for the last few months. Hoping I'd see you again. Do you know, I felt sure that I would. Seemed impossible that I'd complete without seeing you one last time.

K: It's not the last time, Ruth. They offered me a bed. I was planning on staying the night anyway.

Vocabulary

1. boast: to speak of with excessive pride

2. wear someone down: to break down or exhaust by relentless pressure or resistance

3. get to the bottom of: to figure out

4. keep tabs on someone: to observe carefully

(By Wang Yu)